

The City of Gaza in the Roman and Byzantine Periods

Carol A. M. Glucker

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Carol Glucker

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AE</u>	<u>Année Epigraphique</u>
<u>ANET</u>	Pritchard, J.B., <u>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</u> (third edition, Princeton 1960)
<u>ANRW</u>	Temporini, H. & Haase, W. edd., <u>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</u>
<u>ARP</u>	Clermont-Ganneau, C., <u>Archaeological Researches in Palestine 1873-1874</u> (London 1896)
<u>BASOR</u>	<u>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</u>
<u>BMCPal</u>	Hill, G.F., <u>A Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Palestine in the British Museum</u> (London 1914, rep. Bologna 1965)
<u>CAH</u>	<u>The Cambridge Ancient History</u>
<u>CCSL</u>	<u>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</u>
<u>CII</u>	Frey, P.J.B., <u>Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum</u> (Rome, 1952)
<u>CIL</u>	<u>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</u>
<u>EAEHL</u>	Avi-Yonah, M. ed., <u>Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land Vols. I-IV</u> (Jerusalem 1976)
<u>HSCP</u>	<u>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</u>
<u>IEJ</u>	<u>Israel Exploration Journal</u>
<u>IG</u>	<u>Inscriptiones Graecae</u>
<u>IGLS</u>	<u>Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie</u>
<u>IGRR</u>	Cagnet, R., <u>Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes</u> (Paris 1927, rep. Rome 1964)
<u>JPOS</u>	<u>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</u>
<u>JRS</u>	<u>Journal of Roman Studies</u>
<u>MAMA</u>	<u>Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua</u>
<u>OGIS</u>	Dittenberger, W., <u>Orientis Graecae Inscriptiones Selectae</u> (Leipzig 1905, rep. Hildesheim 1960)
<u>PEFQSt.</u>	<u>Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement</u>

<u>PEQ</u>	<u>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</u>
<u>PG</u>	Migne, J.P. ed., <u>Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Graeca</u>
<u>PL</u>	Migne, J.P. ed., <u>Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Latina</u>
<u>QDAP</u>	<u>Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine</u>
<u>RB</u>	<u>Revue Biblique</u>
Schürer ²	Schürer, E., <u>The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ</u> , revised English edition; Vol. I, edd. G. Vermes & F.G.B. Millar (Edinburgh 1973) Vol. II, edd. G. Vermes, F.G.B. Millar & M. Black (Edinburgh 1979)
<u>SCI</u>	<u>Scripta Classica Israelica</u>
<u>SEG</u>	<u>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</u>
<u>SEHWH</u>	Rostovtzeff, M., <u>The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World</u> (London 1941, rep. 1971)
<u>SEHRE</u>	Rostovtzeff, M., <u>The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire</u> , second edition, rev. by P.M. Fraser (London 1957, rep. 1971)
<u>SWP</u>	Conder, C.R. & Kitchener, H.H., <u>The Survey of Western Palestine Vol. III: Judaea</u> (London 1883, rep. Jerusalem, 1970).
<u>TAPA</u>	<u>Transactions of the American Philological Association</u>
<u>ZDPV</u>	<u>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palaestina-Vereins</u>
<u>ZPE</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</u>

INTRODUCTION.

During the Roman and Byzantine periods Gaza became one of the largest and most prosperous cities of Palestine. Yet it played little part in the disturbances that troubled the province and its history was uneventful. Its magnificent buildings have disappeared and, because its site has been occupied continuously down to the present day, very little archaeological investigation has been possible. So Gaza has attracted relatively little interest among modern scholars. Yet there does exist evidence for the development and history of the city. In particular, we have documents from the Byzantine period, written in Gaza and providing valuable evidence for the life of the city at that time. One, the Vita Porphyrii of Marcus Diaconus, gives an eye-witness account of a crucial transition in the city's history, the destruction of the pagan temples and the official imposition of Christianity on the people of Gaza. The others, the speeches of Choricus of Gaza, describe vividly the buildings and festivals of the city at the time of its greatest prosperity and eulogize some of its most famous citizens. There is, moreover, some new archaeological evidence, discovered in the last twenty years, and a few new inscriptions have come to light. The materials exist, then, for a fuller study of of Roman and Byzantine Gaza than has yet been provided in the present century.

The purpose of this work is, therefore, to re-examine the literary sources of Gaza, in the light of modern research, together with the new information provided by archaeology and epigraphy, and to attempt to give as full an account as possible of the history of the city, paying attention to such factors affecting its development as its geographical position and trade. I shall also collect the inscriptions of Gaza, bringing previous collections up-to-date by the addition of inscriptions published in the twentieth century.

A: GAZA THROUGH THE AGES.

The history of the city of Gaza is long and turbulent. Throughout the centuries and the millennia it has been attacked and destroyed, restored and repopulated by one wave of invaders after another. The foundation of the city lies in the distant past and the identity of its founders is unknown. One theory connects the foundation of Gaza with the Minaeans of South Arabia in the first half of the second millennium BC, arguing that they built it as a trading colony and an outlet for their traffic in spices to the Mediterranean.¹ Stephanus of Byzantium mentions that Gaza was also known as Minoa, a name which he connects with the Cretan Minos,² and it is suggested that this is a confused relic of an ancient tradition linking Gaza with the Minaeans.³ But it is difficult to believe that the name of these long-forgotten founders could have been preserved in the city throughout the centuries, despite several changes of population, finally to reach Stephanus in the sixth century AD, and it is probably unsafe to read too much into the scholastic speculations of the later Greeks, who were anxious to link their cities with the myths and legends of the Classical past.

Moreover, none of the early records refers to the spice trade in connection with Gaza, and when the city first appears in history, in

Egyptian records of the Late Bronze Age, its importance rests not on its supposed function as a trading-post of a South Arabian kingdom, but on its geographical position as the southernmost town of Canaan, the first after the long march through the desert that separated Egypt from the fertile lands of the north.⁴ It stood on the main trunk road that ran from Egypt along the coast of Palestine and Phoenicia, with an eastern branch leading to Damascus and onwards to Mesopotamia. This road, referred to once in the Bible as 'The Way of the Sea'⁵ and once as 'The Way to the Land of the Philistines'⁶, and later as the Via Maris⁷, was the vital link between Egypt and the other early empires, both for trade and for warfare and conquest.⁸ Gaza's position on the Way of the Sea and its abundant water supply and natural fertility made it the obvious place where every trading caravan and every army would stop to take on fresh water, provisions and baggage animals, either before the strenuous desert march or after it. The conquest and control of Gaza has, therefore, always been of crucial importance to every general who has ever tried to invade Egypt from the north, or Palestine from the south, down to the present day.⁹

In the second half of the sixteenth century BC, when the Pharaohs of the Egyptian New Kingdom re-established their sovereignty over the city-states of Canaan, after the expulsion of the Hyksos, Gaza was chosen as the main base of the Egyptian administration and as the residence of its governor.¹⁰ The inscriptions of Thutmose III (c. 1468-1436) refer to Gaza as 'That which the Ruler Seized', a title indicating its status as an Egyptian base.¹¹ The city's role in the Egyptian empire is also apparent in the Taanach tablets (dated either to the later part of the reign of Thutmose III, or to that of his successor, Amenhotep II), in which the ruler of Taanach is instructed to send men and materials to the commander at Gaza.¹² The El Amarna letters (dated to between c. 1402 and c. 1347) refer to Gaza as the head-quarters of the commissioner of one of the three districts of Canaan.¹³

During the following two hundred years, Egyptian control gradually weakened, until, in the reign of Rameses III (c. 1175-1144), the Egyptians faced the overwhelming threat of the invasion of the 'Peoples of the Sea'. They succeeded in repulsing the invaders, but their strength was exhausted and their domination over Canaan finally ended. In the confused years that followed the collapse of Egyptian rule, one group of the Sea Peoples, the Philistines, succeeded in installing themselves along the coast of southern Palestine. Gaza then became one of the Philistines' five chief cities, ruled by a seren, or tyrant,¹⁴ and remained little affected by the wars between the Philistines and the Israelites under Saul, David and their successors.

In 734 BC Gaza was conquered by Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria, along with the rest of Syria and Palestine. Like so many other conquerors, he recognized the strategic importance of Gaza and in his first campaign he concentrated on securing the coast as far south as Gaza and the Brook of Egypt, in order to prevent Egyptian intervention, before turning inland, to reduce the Kingdom of Israel and the area around Damascus.¹⁵ In his victory inscriptions Tiglath-pileser records how Hanno, the ruler of Gaza, fled to Egypt, leaving his city to the Assyrians, who imposed tribute on it.¹⁶ During the reign of Sargon II (721-705), Hanno tried, with Egyptian assistance, to regain his city, but was defeated by the Assyrians and taken prisoner.¹⁷ Gaza evidently remained a vassal kingdom under the Assyrians. Sillibel, King of Gaza, refused to join the revolt of Hezekiah of Judah against Sennacherib (705-681) and was rewarded for this by a grant of Judaeen territory.¹⁸ Kings of Gaza named Sil-bel, presumably descendants of

this Sillibel, are mentioned in the records of Esarhaddon (680-669)¹⁹ and Ashurbanipal (668-633).²⁰

After the reign of Ashurbanipal, the Assyrian Empire fell into the hands of the Babylonians. In 605 Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched south against Palestine. Gaza probably fell to him in 603.²¹ Whether or not Gaza remained a vassal kingdom under the Babylonians is uncertain.²²

In 539 the Persian Cyrus gained control of the entire Babylonian Empire. His vast realm was divided into satrapies; Palestine, together with Syria and Phoenicia, formed the satrapy of 'Beyond the River', but it appears that the smaller administrative division into provinces was left unchanged.²³ There is, however, evidence to indicate that Gaza was left outside the borders of the satrapy. Pseudo-Scylax reports that Ascalon was the southernmost city of the Persian province of Coele-Syria. Gaza, it is suggested, was excluded from the province as being dominated by the Arab king Kedar, who controlled the region along the coast to the south of the city.²⁴ There is ample evidence for Gaza's importance as a trading centre at that period. Herodotus describes it as a city not much smaller than Sardis.²⁵ The numerous coins of Gaza minted in the fifth century and closely resembling Athenian coins of the period clearly indicate the role played by the city in international trade.²⁶ Further evidence of trade between Athens and the Arabian tribes of southern Palestine, probably conducted through Gaza, is provided by the Attic pottery discovered at Ezion-geber.²⁷ The close association between Gaza and the Arabs of the area is also suggested by the report that a body of Arab mercenaries was garrisoned within the city, in order to defend it against the assault by Alexander of Macedon in the autumn of 332.²⁸

The siege of Gaza lasted for two months, but eventually the Macedonians were victorious. The men defending the city were all killed, the women and children were sold into slavery, but the town itself was not destroyed. Alexander moved in new inhabitants from the surrounding villages and refortified it, to protect him from the rear during his march down into Egypt.²⁹

During the Hellenistic period Gaza changed hands several times in the course of the unceasing struggle of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids for control over Coele-Syria. In 315 it was conquered by Antigonos,³⁰ but was retaken by Ptolemy I in 312, after his defeat of Antigonos' son Demetrius on the sands south of Gaza.³¹ The next year, however, he was forced to withdraw into Egypt and razed the defences of Gaza and other important cities on the way.³² In 306 Gaza was used by Antigonos and Demetrius as a base for an abortive attack on Egypt by both land and sea.³³

At the battle of Ipsus in 301 Ptolemy regained control of the whole of Palestine and it was held by his successors for the next hundred years, despite attempts by the Seleucids to retake it. In 217 Antiochus III invaded and held most of Palestine. He used Gaza as his base for an attempted invasion of Egypt, which ended with his defeat at Raphia.³⁴ Palestine passed finally into Seleucid hands at the battle of Panion in 200. Gaza had apparently been captured the previous year, after a difficult siege.³⁵

Under the Seleucids Gaza's prosperity and importance as a trading centre apparently declined.³⁶ It played little part in the wars of the Maccabees, but from 145 to 143 it was besieged by Jonathan Maccabaeus, eventually

surrendered and was forced to hand over hostages to him.³⁷ Hellenistic Gaza came to an end around 96 BC, when it was attacked by Alexander Jannaeus. The besieged city held out for a year, but finally, through treachery, it was forced to yield to Jannaeus. The people were massacred and the city itself was destroyed.³⁸

Gaza did not revive until about 58 BC, by which time the Romans under Pompey had gained control of the area and the proconsul Gabinus encouraged the rebuilding of cities destroyed by Jannaeus.³⁹ The first years of the rebuilt city were still unsettled, as a result of the Roman civil wars and the Parthian invasion of 41-40. In 34 Gaza was for a time under the control of Cleopatra,⁴⁰ and in 30 it was made part of the kingdom of Herod,⁴¹ but after his death it was returned to direct Roman rule.⁴²

For the next six hundred years Gaza enjoyed what was probably the longest period of peace and uninterrupted government by one power that it ever experienced throughout its history. During that time the civil wars, rebellions and invasions that troubled the Roman Empire in general and the provinces of Judaea (later Syria Palaestina) in particular passed by Gaza, leaving it untouched. Its citizens must have become accustomed to the sight of Roman legions passing through the town, often with an emperor at their head, on their way to fight Jewish rebels, Parthians, or Roman pretenders to the imperial throne, but they themselves were left in peace. The disturbances that did occur were minor ones. Gaza appears to have been attacked during the Jewish Revolt of AD 66, but cannot have suffered more than minor damage.⁴³ The bitter conflict that developed in the town in the fourth century between pagans and Christians occasionally required the intervention of imperial troops, but does not seem to have led to widespread destruction or loss of life.⁴⁴ Apart from these few incidents, the people of Gaza were left free to carry on their trade, accumulate their profits and expand and beautify their city in peace and security. Towards the end of this long period of stability, in the sixth century AD, Gaza reached the height of its prosperity, adorned with magnificent churches, theatres, bath-houses and other public buildings. Elaborate festivals were held for the entertainment of the citizens and the many pilgrims who visited the city. Moreover, Gaza became a centre of higher education and literary culture that attracted students from the entire Byzantine world.

The prosperity of Gaza did not survive the Arab conquest of 637. The city was not destroyed and for a time served as the administrative centre for the surrounding area,⁴⁵ but the high culture of the Byzantine period disappeared and was not replaced. The city changed hands repeatedly in the frequent dynastic and sectarian disputes between the Moslems during the following centuries.⁴⁶ In 1100 Gaza was occupied and fortified by the Christians of the First Crusade. They held it, with some difficulty, until 1187, when they surrendered it to Saladin. In 1191, during the Third Crusade, Gaza was briefly held by Richard I of England, but under his treaty with Saladin its fortifications were dismantled.⁴⁷

From the thirteenth to the fifteenth century Gaza played its traditional role as a strategic stronghold vital to the success of any war between Egypt and its neighbours to the north, and was the site of frequent battles between Mamelukes, Syrians, Christians and Mongols. Eventually, in 1516, the city fell to the Ottoman Turks and became part of their empire.⁴⁸ It was made the capital of the province of Palestine and once again became prosperous.⁴⁹

In 1799 Gaza was again occupied by an invader marching north from Egypt, this time Napoleon, who saw the conquest of Gaza as essential for the maintenance of his control over Egypt. But later the same year he was forced to withdraw through Gaza and abandon it after his defeat at Acre.⁵⁰

In the early part of the nineteenth century Gaza and other parts of Palestine were in the hands of Mohammed Ali, who had rebelled against his Turkish overlord. In 1840 he was defeated in a battle with the Turks near Gaza and his army was completely destroyed.⁵¹

Gaza then remained under Turkish control until 1917, when, after prolonged and heavy fighting, it was captured by Allenby, once again marching north from Egypt to the conquest of Palestine.⁵² Then it was under British mandatory rule until 1948, when it was occupied by the Egyptians and held by them, with the exception of a few months in 1956, until 1967. Since then it has been under Israeli occupation. After nearly four thousand years of history, Gaza is still a focus for conflict between the nations of the region.

B: PREVIOUS RESEARCH INTO GAZA.

Investigation into the topography and history of Gaza began in the nineteenth century. The town was visited by many of the travellers and antiquarians, who were eagerly exploring the Holy Land and its ancient sacred sites.⁵³ Among the first was the American theologian, Edward Robinson, who visited Gaza in 1838 and recorded his impressions of the town, describing it as large and well-populated, surrounded by fertile gardens and orchards.⁵⁴ In 1863 Gaza was visited by Victor Guérin, who was also impressed by the fertility of the area, its olive groves and orchards. He described the mosques and churches of Gaza, noted the ancient columns and other architectural fragments in secondary use in its buildings, and summarized and commented upon the ancient history of the town.⁵⁵ A later visitor was the archaeologist Charles Clermont-Ganneau, who spent some time in Gaza in 1874. He concentrated on investigating the antiquities of the town, surveyed the Great Mosque and a small church, and collected a large number of inscriptions, mostly Byzantine epitaphs, which provided the basis for establishing the era and calendar of Gaza.⁵⁶ In 1875 Gaza was surveyed for the British Palestine Exploration Fund by Captians Conder and Kitchener. The section of Gaza in their Survey of Western Palestine includes a description of the topography of the town, together with a brief summary of its principal buildings and sites of archaeological interest.⁵⁷

In the twentieth century, however, Gaza has attracted little attention from scholars and almost no archaeological investigations have been carried out there. It is, of course, extremely difficult and expensive to excavate on a large scale in a site occupied by a modern town, and the political tensions of the area are another factor that has deterred archaeologists from exploring the town and its surroundings thoroughly.

In 1922 the British archaeologist W.H. Phythian-Adams cut two exploratory trenches through the north side of the tell at Gaza and uncovered a number of walls and some pottery, which he identified as of the Bronze and Iron Age and of the Roman period. Unfortunately, his excavations were on too small a scale and his report on them too brief and lacking in detail to provide useful evidence as to the history of the town, though he himself believed his failure to find Hellenistic pottery there to

be significant.⁵⁸

In 1965 a large and well-preserved mosaic pavement was found close to the sea not far from Gaza. The Egyptian excavators took it as being from a Byzantine church, but Israeli archaeologists immediately identified it from the published photographs as the pavement of a synagogue. After Israel gained control of the Gaza Strip in June 1967, an archaeological rescue expedition was mounted under the direction of A. Ovadiah and the synagogue and some surrounding industrial buildings were uncovered and investigated. A later season of excavations in 1976 revealed more buildings and installations and some fortifications. These findings are of importance as evidence both for the site of Gaza's port town Maioumas, which had hitherto been uncertain, and for the presence of a Jewish community in the town in the Byzantine period. Ovadiah has published a number of articles dealing with the discoveries.⁵⁹ Since then no further archaeological work has been carried out in the town.

Nor have ancient historians paid much attention to Gaza. Only three complete books have been written on the history of the city. The first, Gaza und die Philistäische Küste by K.B. Stark, was published in 1852. It is a massive work of 645 pages, covering the period from the foundation of the city until the Arab conquest. Stark was clearly a serious scholar, thoroughly familiar with the literary sources, Greek, Latin and Hebrew. He had a sound grasp of history, and was able to consider developments in Gaza within a broader historical context. His book contains much that is of value and interest even today and is basic to any study of the history of Gaza. But it is obviously out-of-date in many respects. Stark was not aware of the ancient Egyptian and Assyrian documents that have revolutionized the study of the history of the ancient Near East. Since work on the decipherment and translation of these records was in its very early stages in the eighteen-fifties, he can hardly be blamed for that, but the first half of his book is, therefore, completely superseded. In the field of Classical studies too, the development of archaeology, epigraphy and numismatics has brought about great changes in the methods of historical research and has profoundly influenced our view of the ancient world. Stark wrote at a time when these sciences were still in their infancy, although he drew on their evidence as far as it was available to him. His work needs, therefore, to be brought up to date, by consideration both of the later discoveries specifically related to Gaza and of more general changes in the field of ancient history.

The second book dealing with the history of Gaza is M.A. Meyer's A History of the City of Gaza, published in 1907. It attempts to cover the entire history of Gaza from its foundation to the end of the nineteenth century, and contains an immense amount of information and references to a wide range of sources. But it has serious limitations. Meyer was a student more of Semitic languages and literature than of the Classics and, as he himself admits in his preface, for the Classical period he relied very heavily upon Stark.⁶⁰ He attempted to add such new material as had become available since Stark's time, in particular the inscriptions collected by Clermont-Ganneau. But frequently he merely summarised Stark, not always checking whether new information was to be found.⁶¹ Moreover, he displays a lack of understanding of the history and institutions of the Graeco-Roman world.⁶² Occasionally he makes a statement that is not supported by his sources.⁶³ At times the logic of his argument is unclear or confused.⁶⁴ His references are sometimes inaccurate or inadequate and he gives no proper bibliography. All these factors limit the usefulness of his work, despite

the large amount of information it contains.

The third book on ancient Gaza deals only with one specific period. This is Gaza in the Early Sixth Century by G. Downey, which gives a vivid and convincing description of life in the city at the height of its prosperity and cultural pre-eminence. It is based on deep knowledge of the sources on Gaza itself and of the history and literature of the Classical and Byzantine periods in general. But it is a popular book, one of the Centers of Civilization series published by the University of Oklahoma, and it does not give references to its sources. It is therefore of little assistance to academic research.

Separate aspects of the ancient history of Gaza have been discussed in a number of individual articles, including U. Rappaport's Gaza and Ascalon in the Persian and Hellenistic Periods in relation to their Coins,⁶⁵ A. Kasher's Gaza during the Greco-Roman Era,⁶⁶ which also deals mainly with the Hellenistic period, and A. Guillou's La Prise de Gaza par les Arabes,⁶⁷ which establishes the date of the Arab conquest of Gaza as AD 637, not 634, as is sometimes stated.

Gaza is, of course, also discussed in general works on the geography and ancient history of Palestine, such as those of G.A. Smith,⁶⁸ F.-M. Abel⁶⁹ and M. Avi-Yonah.⁷⁰ These scholars summarize the history of the city, listing ancient sources and discussing problems arising from them, such as the complicated question whether Gaza was at any time rebuilt on a site different from that of the ancient biblical city. One very important recent work of this kind, which includes valuable references to modern research, is the revised English edition of E. Schürer's History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ.⁷¹

Another extremely useful recent work, The City in Eretz-Israel During the Late Roman & Byzantine Periods by the late Yaron Dan, the product of immense learning and familiarity with Byzantine sources in a number of languages, is so far available only in Hebrew. It is to be hoped that an English translation will eventually make Dan's valuable contribution to the history of Byzantine Palestine accessible to a wider public.

Research into Gaza has also been facilitated in the twentieth century by the publication of scholarly and widely available editions of two of the most important Byzantine sources on Gaza. The first is H. Grégoire and M.-A. Kugener's extremely learned edition of the Vita Porphyrii of Marcus Diaconus, complete with French translation, lengthy introduction and detailed notes. The second is the Teubner edition, by R. Foerster and E. Richsteig, of the works of Choricus of Gaza.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION.

1. M.A. Meyer, History of the City of Gaza, 13-14, 19.
2. Steph.Byz. s.v. Gaza. On Hellenistic legends explaining the names and glorifying the origins of Palestinian cities, see Abel, Histoire de la Palestine I, 270-273.
3. Meyer, 14; K.B. Stark, Gaza und die Philistäische Küste, 580-583.
4. In fact Raphia, several miles to the south of Gaza, is also an ancient town, mentioned in early Egyptian sources. But it seems never to have achieved the size or importance of Gaza. On Raphia, see Ch. I, pp. 12-13.
5. דרך הים Isaiah 9, 1.
6. דרך ארץ פלשתיים Exodus 13, 17.
7. Via Maris was the phrase used in Latin versions of the Bible for Isaiah's דרך הים. In the Middle Ages it was also used of the road from Damascus to the coast. Y. Aharoni, The Land of the Bible, 46.
8. Aharoni, 45-46.
9. M. Gichon, 'The History of the Gaza Strip: A Geo-political and Geostrategic Perspective', The Jerusalem Cathedra 2, 282-317.,
10. Aharoni, 150-151.
11. ANET, 235; Aharoni, 153.
12. Aharoni, 169.
13. Aharoni, 172.
14. Aharoni, 267-270.
15. Aharoni, 368-72.
16. ANET, 283.
17. ANET, 284, 285.
18. 2 Kings, 18,8; ANET, 288; Aharoni, 387-389.
19. ANET, 291.
20. ANET, 294.
21. Aharoni, 405.
22. Aharoni, 408.
23. Aharoni, 411.

24. Herodotus III, 5: μούνη δὲ ταύτη εἰσὶ φανεραὶ ἐσβολαὶ ἐς Αἴγυπτον· ἀπὸ γὰρ Φοινίκης μέχρι οὖρων τῶν Καδούτιος πόλιος ἐστὶ Συρίων τῶν Παλαιστίνων καλεομένων· ἀπὸ δὲ Καδούτιος ἐούσης πόλιος, ὡς ἔμοι δοκεῖ, Σαρδίων οὐ πολλῶν ἑλάσσονος, ἀπὸ ταύτης τὰ ἔμπορια τὰ ἐπὶ θαλάσσης μέχρι Ἰηνύσου, πόλιος ἐστὶ τοῦ Ἀραβίου, ἀπὸ δὲ Ἰηνύσου αὐτίς Συρίων μέχρι Σερβωνίδος λίμνης, παρ' ἣν δὴ τὸ Κάσιον ὄρος τείνει ἐς θαλάσσαν·

Herodotus calls Gaza **Καδούτις** because he was familiar with the Egyptian form of the name, transliterated q-d-t, or g-d-t, Aharoni, 114. See also *ibid* 412; U. Rappaport, 'Gaza and Ascalon in the Persian and Hellenistic Periods in relation to their coins', *IEJ* 20 (1970), 75; A. Kasher, 'Gaza during the Greco-Roman Era', *The Jerusalem Cathedra*, 2, 63-65.

25. *loc.cit.* last note.
26. Rappaport, 75-76; *BMC Pal* lxxxiii-lxxxix, 176-183.
27. Aharoni, 414-415.
28. Arrian, *Anab.* II, 25,4.
29. Arrian, *Anab.* II, 26-27; Diod. XVII, 48,7; Jos. *Ant.* XI, 8,4 (325).
30. Diod. XIX 59,2.
31. Diod. XIX 80-84.
32. Diod. XIX 93,7.
33. Diod. XX 73-74.
34. Polyb. V 80-86.
35. Polyb. XVI 18,2; XVI 22a (4); XXIX 12 (6a).
36. Rappaport, 77-78.
37. I Macc. 11, 61-62; Jos. *Ant.* XIII 5,5 (153).
38. Jos. *Ant.* XIII 13,3 (358-364); *B.J.* I 4,2 (87).
39. Jos. *Ant.* XIV 11,4 (76); 5,3 (87-88); *B.J.* I 7,7 (156-157).
40. Jos. *Ant.* XV 4,1 (95); *B.J.* I 18,5 (361).
41. Jos. *Ant.* XV 7,3 (217); *B.J.* I 20,3 (396).
42. Jos. *Ant.* XVII 11,4 (320); *B.J.* II 6,3 (97).
43. Jos. *B.J.* II 18,1 (460); Schürer² II, 102.

44. See also e.g. Marc.Diac. 22-25, 95, 99; See Ch.2, pp. 45-48.
45. Kraemer, Excavations at Nessana III, 32; PColt nos. 55, 59, 60-67, 75.
46. Meyer, 76-79.
47. Meyer, 80-83,
48. Meyer, 83-96.
49. Meyer, 97-99.
50. Meyer, 101-102; Gichon, 304-307.
51. Meyer, 102-103; Gichon, 307-308.
52. Gichon, 308-312.
53. On these nineteenth century travellers, see: Y. Ben-Arieh The Rediscovery of the Holy Land.
54. Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia II, 367-383.
55. Description de la Palestine II, 178-211.
56. ARP, 379-437. For the inscriptions, see Appendix, pp. 115-156 below.
57. SWP III, 234-235; 248-251.
58. PEFQSt. 1923, 11-36.
59. Qadmoniot I (1968), 124-127 (Hebrew); IEJ 19 (1969), 193-198; RB 82 (1975), 552-557; IEJ 27 (1977), 176-178. See also: M. Barasch, The David Mosaic of Gaza (type-script in Tel-Aviv University Library).
60. Meyer, viii.
61. See e.g. his discussion of the magistrates of Gaza (pp. 55-57). It is true that he makes use of more recently discovered inscriptions referring to Gaza as a colonia and to the agoranomos of the city, but the rest of the discussion is a confused summary of Stark, 526-553. Moreover, he follows Stark in quoting Marcus Diaconus in Latin translation, despite the fact that since Stark's time the Greek text had been published twice, first by Haupt in 1874 and then in the Bonn edition of 1895, and should have been available to him.
62. E.g. his definition of a Roman colonia on p. 55: 'These military colonies were directly under the emperor of Rome, who appointed a legate to take charge of the cities in his name. The Senate had nothing to do with such colonies, as their form of government was but the extension of the military ideal'.
63. On p. 60 he states that, after the death of the Emperor Julian, Maioumas, the port town of Gaza, was for a second time made independent. He supports this with a reference to Sozomen, H.E.V,9, which concerns the persecution of Christians in Gaza under Julian and is irrelevant in this context. On the next page he accurately reports

Sozomen's account, that Maioumas remained subject to Gaza, although retaining a separate bishopric, and gives the correct reference (H.E.III, 8).

64. See e.g. pp. 9-11, where he first quotes two ancient sources which state that at some stage a 'New Gaza' was built on a site different from that of 'Old Gaza', and then proceeds to argue from them that the new city was built immediately over the ruins of the old one.
65. Loc.cit. n. 24 above. Another useful article which discusses Hellenistic Gaza is M. Stern, 'Hareka hamedini lemilhamotav shel Alexander Yannai', Tarbiz 33 (1963), 325-336.
66. Loc.cit. n. 24 above.
67. Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique 81 (1957), 396-404.
68. The Historical Geography of the Holy Land; on Gaza: 133-138.
69. Géographie de la Palestine II; on Gaza: 327-328.
70. The Holy Land from the Persian to the Arab Conquests; on Gaza: 150-151; A Gazetteer of Roman Palestine; on Gaza: 59.
71. On Gaza: 98-103.

CHAPTER 1: THE TOPOGRAPHY OF GAZA

A: THE SITUATION OF THE CITY AND ITS PORT

The modern town of Gaza is situated at 31° 30' N. Lat. and 34° 28' E. Long. (map ref. 099101)¹. It lies in the southern part of the coastal plain, about three miles from the sea, at a point where the sand dunes give way to sandy, but fertile soil.² The town is built on and around a low hill, which rises about 100 ft. above the surrounding level ground.³ Another hill, known as Ali-Muntar, rises to the south-east of Gaza.⁴ The land surrounding the town is extremely fertile and well-watered, despite relatively low annual rainfall (300-400 mm. p.a.).⁵ A large number of wells provide water for the town and the surrounding fields.⁶ This abundant ground water supply is due to the fact that Gaza lies just outside a closed catchment area, where water has no outlet to the sea and so is collected beneath the surface of the ground. The town itself is situated in an intermediate area, drained by numerous small streams, rather than one main channel.⁷ The reports of nineteenth century travellers, who visited the town at a time when conditions in the area were largely unchanged since ancient times, describe Gaza as exceptionally fertile, and as surrounded by olive groves, orchards and gardens.⁸

It has never been doubted that modern Gaza rests on the site of the Roman and Byzantine city, and the early travellers investigated and recorded the ancient architectural fragments they discovered in their explorations of the town.⁹ By the nineteenth century the walls of Gaza were no longer standing, though they could be traced.¹⁰ Conder and Kitchener describe 'green mounds' extending round the central hill and suggest that these are the remains of the Crusader fortifications.¹¹

Gaza is sheltered by sand dunes from the sea, which is not visible from the town,¹² but a road leads down to the shore and a landing-stage¹³. This is undoubtedly the site of the ancient port town of Gaza, which in earlier sources is referred to simply as ὁ τῶν Γαζαίων λιμὴν,¹⁴ but in the Byzantine period was known as Maioumas.¹⁵ Traces of ancient walls and quantities of potsherds are to be found among the dunes facing the beach,¹⁶ and the discovery and excavation of a Byzantine synagogue and industrial and residential buildings close to the beach just south of the present landing-stage, and massive fortifications to the north of it, have made it clear that a prosperous town existed on the site at that period.¹⁷ It may seem surprising that this had ever been doubted, particularly as on a nineteenth century plan of Gaza the city gate on the road leading to the sea is marked Bab Maimâs (Maioumas Gate),¹⁸ but one theory had argued that the shoals off the coast of Gaza made the presence of a port there impossible, and that Maioumas must have been situated further to the north, close to the site of the ancient Anthedon.¹⁹

The abundant water-supply and fertility of Gaza and the possibility of conducting sea-trade from its shore, even without a real harbour, are undoubtedly the factors that led to Gaza's prosperity and importance in the ancient period. This is clearly demonstrated by a comparison with Raphia, twenty-two miles to the south of Gaza. This town (present-day Rafah),

although existing from early times, never achieved the size or importance of Gaza. It is basically a desert oasis, with a mean average rainfall lower than that of Gaza²⁰ and, although Abel remarks, 'Rafah doit son importance à ses puits' and 'certains de ces puits sont comblés',²¹ it seems that Raphia was never able to supply water and provisions for a transient army on the same lavish scale as Gaza. Moreover, Raphia had no harbour, its coasts facing dangerous shoals, a fact commented on by Diodorus: ...

21a Gaza, on the other hand, could provide for every army and every trading caravan travelling on the coastal highway,²² and its port was also of vital commercial importance, serving as an outlet for the profitable spice trade from South Arabia, as well for the agricultural produce, particularly, in the Byzantine period, the wine, of the surrounding area.²³

B: OLD AND NEW GAZA

This combination of favourable conditions makes the situation of Gaza seem ideal for the development of a large and prosperous town at all periods. It is, therefore, surprising to discover that some of the ancient sources suggest that at some stage the original site of the city was abandoned and a 'New Gaza' built in a different position. The information given by these sources is not entirely clear and considerable controversy has arisen among scholars as to their interpretation and as to the establishing of the sites of 'Old' and 'New' Gaza. Since the problem is an extremely complex one, before discussing it, I shall first list the sources:

Quaeritur autem quomodo in quodam profeta dicatur Gaza futura in tumulum sempiternum. quod solvitur ita: antiquae civitatis locum vix fundamentorum praebere vestigia, hanc autem, quae nunc cernitur, in alio loco, pro illa, quae corrui, aedificatam.

Jerome, Onomasticon, ed. Klostermann, p. 63.

B. μετὰ τὰ Ῥινοκδρουρα ἡ νέα Γάζα κεῖται πόλις οὔσα καὶ αὐτῆ, εἶθ' ἡ ἔρημος Γάζα, εἶτα ἡ Ἀσκαλων πόλις.

Fragment in Hudson, Geographiae Scriptores Graeci Minores IV (1717) p. 39²⁴.

C. ἀπὸ δὲ Πηλουσίου διὰ τῆς ἐρήμου διελθῶν κατεστρατοπέδευσε [ὁ Πτολεμαῖος] πλησίον τῶν πολεμῶν περὶ τὴν παλαιὰν Γάζαν τῆς Συρίας. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Δημήτριος . . . εἰς τὴν παλαιὰν Γάζαν ὑπέμεινε τὴν τῶν ἐναντίων ἔφοδον.

Diodorus Siculus XIX 80, 5

μέχρι μὲν οὖν Γάζης οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν ἰπέων
συνακολουθοῦντες ὑπήκουον καὶ κατέστησαν εἰς
τάξεις... παραλλάσσοντος δὲ αὐτοῦ [τοῦ Δημητρίου]
Γάζαν περὶ ἡλίου δύσιν ἀπολιπόντες τῶν ἰπέων
τινὲς παρήλθον εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἐκκομισαὶ βουλομένοι
τὰς ἀποσκευὰς. ἀνοιχθειῶν οὖν τῶν πυλῶν καὶ
πλήθους ὑποζυγίων ἀθροισθέντος....

Ibid. XIX 84, 7-8.

D. Παλαίγαζαν or Παλαίγαζαμ

Fragment in Eusebius, Chronicon, ed. Schoene, I coll. 249-50.

E. ἐπὶ τὴν ὁδὸν τὴν καταβαίνουσαν ὑπὸ
Ἱερουσαλήμ εἰς Γάζαν· αὕτη ἐστὶν ἔρημος.

Acts 8, 26.

F. Εἰθ' ὁ τῶν Γαζαίων λιμὴν πλησίον· ὑπέρκειται δὲ καὶ
ἡ πόλις ἐν ἑπτὰ σταδίοις ἐνδοξὸς ποτε γενομένη,
κατεσπασμένη δ' ὑπὸ Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ μένουσα ἔρημος.

Strabo XVI 2, 30 (759).

G. Ἀπέχει δὲ ἡ Γάζα τῆς μὲν θαλάσσης εἴκοσι μάλιστα
σταδίου, καὶ ἔστι ψαμμώδης καὶ βαθεῖα εἰς αὐτὴν ἡ
ἄνοδος καὶ ἡ θάλασσα ἡ κατὰ τὴν πόλιν τεναγώδης
πάσα. μεγάλη δὲ πόλις ἡ Γάζα ἦν καὶ ἐπὶ χώματος
ὑψηλοῦ ὤκτιστο καὶ τεῖχος περιεβέβλητο αὐτῆ ὀχυρόν.
ἔσχάτη δὲ ὤκειτο ὡς ἐπ' Αἴγυπτον ἐκ Φοινίκης
ἴδοντι ἐπὶ τῆ ἀρχῆ τῆς ἔρημου.

Arrian, Anabasis II 26, 1.

H. τὴν πόλιν δὲ συνοικίσας ἐκ τῶν περιοίκων ἐχρήτο
ὅσα φρουρῶν εἰς πόλεμον.

Ibid. II 27, 7.

I. ὁ δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος τούτους τε ἀναιρεῖ καὶ τὴν πόλιν
αὐτοῖς ἐπικατασκάψας ὑπέστρεψεν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα
ἐνιαυτῷ πολιορκήσας.

Josephus, Antiquitates XIII 13, 3(364).

J. Γαβρίλιος μὲν οὖν, , αὐτὸς ἐπῆρει τὴν ἄλλην Ἰουδαίαν, καὶ ὅσαις ἐπετύγχανεν καθρημέναις τῶν πόλεων κτίζειν παρεκέλευετο. καὶ ἀνεκτίσθησαν Γάζα καὶ ἄλλαι οὐκ ὀλίγαι. τῶν δὲ ἀνθρώπων πειθομένων οἷς ὁ Γαβρίλιος προσέταττεν βεβαίως οἰκηθῆναι τότε συνέβαινε τὰς πόλεις πολλὺν χρόνον ἔρημους γενομένας.
Ibid XIV 5, 3(88-88).

K. ἠλευθέρωσεν δὲ ἀπ' αὐτῶν καὶ τὰς ἐν τῇ μεσογαίᾳ πόλεις, , Ἴππον Σκυθοπολὶν τε καὶ Πέλλαν καὶ Σαμάρειαν καὶ Μάρισαν Ἄζωτον τε καὶ Ἀρέθουσαν, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὰς παραλίους Γάζαν Ἰόππην Δῶρα καὶ τὴν πάλαι μὲν Στρατωνος πύργον καλουμένην.

Josephus, Bellum Judaicum I 7, 7(156). (c.f. B.J. I 20, 3(396); Ant. XIV, 4, 4(76); Ant. XV 7, 3(217)).

L. πρὸς θαλάσση μὲν Στρατωνος πύργον Ἀπολλωνίαν Ἰόππην Ἰάμνειαν Ἄζωτον Γάζαν Ἀνηθόνα Ῥάφειαν Ῥινοκόρουρα, ἐν δὲ τῇ μεσογαίᾳ,

Josephus, Antiquitates XIII 15, 4(395).

M. αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν [ὁ Ἀντίγονος] τοῦ πεζοῦ στρατεύματος ἀφηγοῦμενος προῆγε διὰ Κοίλης Συρίας τῷ δὲ Δημητρίῳ παραδοῦς τὸν στόλον συνέταξε συμπαραπλεῖν ἅμα πορευομένη τῇ δυνάμει αὐτὸς δὲ στρατοπεδεύων περὶ Γάζαν τοῖς μὲν στρατιώταις παρήγγειλε δεχ' ἡμερῶν ἐπιστίσιν, προῆγε διὰ τῆς ἔρημου οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Δημήτριον ἐκ τῆς Γάζης ἐκπλεθσαντες τῶν δὲ πλοίων τὰ μὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ χειμῶνος συγκλυσθέντα διεφθάρη, τὰ δὲ ἐπαλινδρόμησεν εἰς τὴν Γάζαν.

Diodorus Siculus XX 73-74.

Two of these sources (testimonia A and B.) speak clearly of the destruction of the ancient city of Gaza and its restoration on a new site, according to B, south of the old city. Several others mention an 'Old' or 'Deserted' Gaza, without any reference to the new city (testt. C D E F). E has given rise to controversy, some scholars believing that ἔρημος refers back to τὴν ὁδὸν rather than to Γάζαν, because at the time of the composition of Acts, and at that of the incident narrated, Gaza

was clearly not deserted²⁵. But others insist that the structure of the sentence makes it impossible for ἔρημος to refer to ὄδον and that no possible route from Jerusalem to Gaza could reasonably be described as 'desert' or 'deserted'. Moreover, they stress the fact that other sources also refer to Gaza as ἔρημος (e.g. testt. B,F).²⁶

The date of this destruction and refoundation of Gaza is also uncertain. Some scholars have accepted Strabo's statement (F) that it was destroyed by Alexander. But that is contradicted by Arrian, who clearly states (H) that, after the conquest of Gaza, Alexander repopulated and refortified the city. It is also clear from Diodorus' account of the battle of 312 BC between Ptolemy and Demetrius (C), that at that time Gaza was occupied, fortified and engaged in trade. It seems more reasonable to assume that Strabo was confused by an account of the destruction of Gaza by Alexander Jannaeus in around 96 BC, after which Gaza was certainly deserted for a considerable length of time, as is reported by Josephus (I J). It seems possible that Strabo and Josephus used the same sources, or at least followed the same tradition, even if Strabo misunderstood it. (Strabo is also inaccurate in reporting that Gaza is at a distance of seven stades from the sea. Arrian's twenty stades is far nearer the true distance). Altogether, from the evidence we have, it seems most likely that, when the sources refer to 'Old Gaza', they mean the city destroyed by Jannaeus in 96 BC and that by 'New Gaza' they imply the rebuilt city founded by Gabinus between 57 and 55 BC.²⁷

But even more problematic than the date is the fact that the present-day town of Gaza, undoubtedly the same as the Roman-Byzantine city, appears to be on the same site as the ancient Canaanite-Philistine city. This is the impression given by Arrian, whose description of the site of the city destroyed by Alexander (G) precisely fits that of the modern town.²⁸ It is also suggested by the findings of the trial excavations carried out by Phythian-Adams in 1922. He sank a trench through the north side of the tell and reported the discovery of a glacis, a number of defensive walls and a certain amount of Bronze and Iron Age pottery.²⁹ It may also be noted that in the fifth century AD the people of Gaza believed that their city occupied the site of the ancient town. A place within the city was reportedly known as Irene, because it was at that point that the fighting stopped when the Gazaeans surrendered to Alexander the Great.³⁰ This tradition sounds implausible, but would hardly have been repeated if the people of Gaza had been aware that they were living in a 'New Gaza', on a totally different site from the ancient city. On the other hand, at about the same time, Jerome was reporting that the ruins of the old city could still be seen on a site different from that of the existing town (A). Jerome's remark is, of course, tendentious, an attempt to reconcile the ancient prophecy of the destruction of Gaza with the fact that in his time, far from being in ruins, the city was flourishing. But presumably there were some visible ruins in the area for him to identify with the old city.

But if the modern town is on the site of ancient Gaza, then 'New Gaza' was somewhere else and, at some stage, the town must have shifted yet again and returned to its original site, something for which we have no evidence at all.

Several different suggestions have been proposed as a solution to this problem. Stark simply accepts the testimony of the anonymous fragment (A) that New Gaza was built to the south of the old city.³¹ Meyer quotes testt. A and B and then proceeds to ignore their evidence and argue that New

Gaza was built on the same site as the ruined city.³²

Phythian-Adams was struck by the fact that in his excavations at Gaza he found no Hellenistic pottery. This led him to believe that the site was at least partly deserted during that period and that at some time after the conquest by Alexander a new Gaza must have grown up on a different site. This New Gaza, he argues, was on the coast, and he interprets passages from Diodorus and Josephus (K L M) in support of this claim. In the Roman period, he believes, 'Ancient Gaza' regained its importance as a station on the caravan road to Egypt and 'New Gaza' fell into decline, Gaza's sea trade then shifting to the port Maioumas, which, he believes, lay to the north of Gaza, close to Anthedon. One possible site for 'New Gaza', he suggests, without presenting any evidence for it, is Tell-el-Ajjul, close to the sea on the Wadi Gaza, to the south of the town.³³

But, as Phythian-Adams himself admits, his excavations at Gaza were on too small a scale to provide evidence for the city as a whole.³⁴ Moreover, there is no need to interpret any of the passages he quotes from Diodorus and Josephus as referring to a maritime city. All are perfectly intelligible, and are usually understood, as referring to the ancient city on its traditional site, with its nearby port. For instance, he claims that Diodorus' account of the expedition against Egypt of 306BC, led by Antigonos by land and Demetrius by sea, (M) implies that Gaza must have been a coastal city at that time, since Diodorus names it as the point where both forces gathered before the invasion.³⁵ But this interpretation is totally unnecessary. It is quite comprehensible on the assumption that Antigonos' army camped at Gaza, on its traditional site on the road to Egypt, while Demetrius' fleet moored off the shore three miles away. The fact that Diodorus states that the fleet sailed ἐκ τῆς Γάζης and not ἐκ τοῦ τῶν Γαζαίων λιμένος does not have any particular significance. It is simply a loose expression.

The same is true for the remarks of Josephus which he quotes.³⁶ While Josephus does sometimes refer to Gaza as a maritime city, in contradistinction to such towns as Azotus and Jamnia, which are little, if at all, further inland than Gaza, (K), in one place (L) he lists these two alongside Gaza and other towns as being on the coast. He is simply not very precise in his use of these terms.

G.A. Smith also believed that 'New Gaza' was built, by Gabinus, on the coast, possibly close to the existing harbour. He also cites Josephus (K) in support of 'Maritime Gaza', and suggests that the original site may not have been completely abandoned, or at least not for any considerable length of time, and that, although it continued to be known as 'Desert Gaza', people would gradually have moved back to it, attracted by its position on the main road and the fertility of the site.³⁷ Once again, there is no evidence to support this theory and it is not safe to interpret Josephus' words too precisely.

Yet another theory, that of Abel, also involves Tell-el-Ajjul, this time as 'Ancient Gaza'. The tell was excavated by Sir Flinders Petrie, who also identified it as 'Ancient Gaza' and found rich Canaanite and Egyptian remains there.³⁸ Abel suggested that, although its buildings were destroyed by the Philistines around 1200 BC, sufficient traces remained visible to lead the Greeks to the conclusion that this was the original site of the city and to name the tell 'Palaigaza'.³⁹ This suggestion neatly disposes of the necessity of assuming that Gaza changed its site in

Hellenistic or Roman times, and fits very well Diodorus' account (C) of the Battle of Gaza of 312 BC: the battle took place close to Tell-el-Ajjul (ἡ παλαιὰ Γάζα) and, while fleeing northward, Demetrius' defeated troops passed the city of Gaza and some of them entered it to acquire baggage animals. But it may be doubted whether buildings abandoned in the second millenium, in an area consisting largely of sand-dunes, would still have been visible in the Hellenistic period, let alone the fifth century AD, when Jerome speaks of the ruins of 'Ancient Gaza' as still visible (A).

But the main difficulty in accepting Abel's solution, and those of the scholars who argue for a 'New Gaza' on the coast, is that they ignore the evidence of the anonymous fragment (B), which states that 'New Gaza' lay to the south of the 'Old' or 'Desert Gaza'. It is possible that its author was mistaken and has confused the relative positions of Old and New Gaza. We have, after all, no evidence as to his identity, date, sources, or general reliability. But he offers a clear statement, which it seems unsafe to ignore, or to dismiss, as Meyer does, as 'a literary creation, rather than a historical fact'.⁴¹ The editors of the revised English edition of Schürer take the view that this testimony must be accepted and that 'New Gaza' lay to the south of the ancient city.⁴²

But this still leaves unanswered the questions: where was New Gaza and when was it abandoned in favour of a return to the original site. Yet another question is: why was the ancient site abandoned at all? It had so many advantages, its proximity to a port, while being sheltered from winter storms, the fertility of the surrounding fields, and, above all, its plentiful water supply, that it seems surprising that there could be any reason to induce its inhabitants to abandon the site.

Perhaps the answer is that the city was not moved very far. Maybe all that the sources mean is that the original tell was abandoned and Gaza rebuilt at its foot, a little to the south, as happened at other ancient cities, for instance Beit-She'an and Jericho.⁴³ It is true that the tell at Gaza is within the modern town, and probably has been since Roman times,⁴⁴ but it is easy to imagine that, as the city grew, it could have expanded northward until it encompassed the tell again. This solution would explain why no satisfactory site for 'New Gaza' has been found, and why there is no reference to its abandonment in favour of the original site. It would also account for the name Ἐρημος that clung to Gaza. The tell with its ruins would have been more conspicuous, particularly for those approaching from the north (E), than the new city at its foot. No doubt the ruined buildings on the mound would gradually have been dismantled and their stones reused, until, as Jerome said (A), only the traces of the foundations remained visible.

But once again there is no evidence to support this hypothesis, and there seems to be no simple and obvious solution to the problem of Old and New Gaza. For such a solution further evidence is needed, and this evidence could be provided only by extensive archaeological surveying and excavation in and around Gaza, which, unfortunately, is unlikely to be possible in the foreseeable future.

C: GAZA ON THE MADEBA MAP.

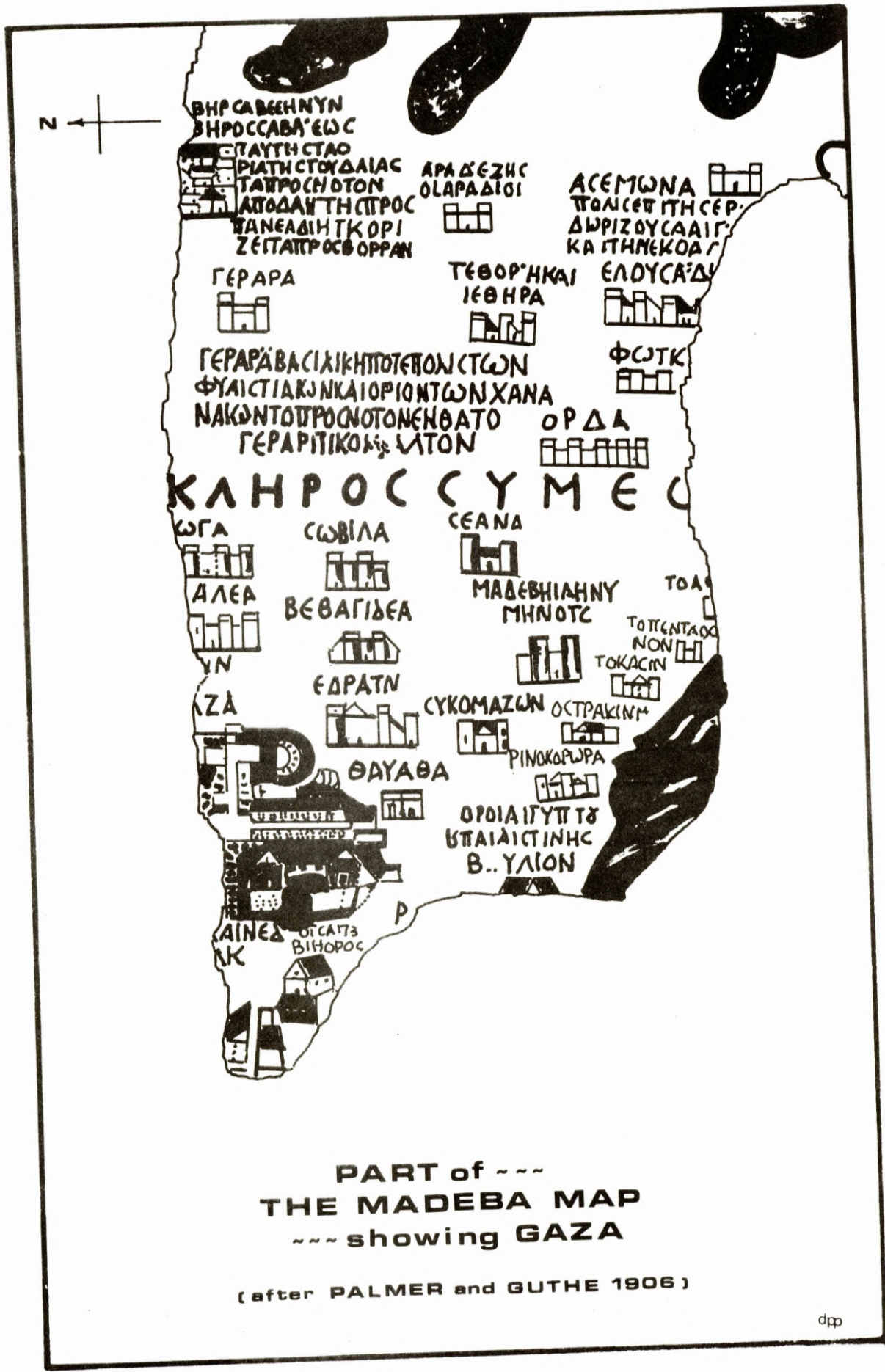
One useful piece of evidence for the topography of Gaza and the surrounding region in the Byzantine period is the mosaic map from a church

in Madeba in Jordan.⁴⁵ The map can be dated to the latter part of the reign of Justinian,⁴⁶ and apparently relied heavily, though not entirely, on the Onomasticon of Eusebius for the place-names it records.⁴⁷ It was badly damaged at the time of its discovery, but the section depicting Gaza and its surroundings is partly preserved.

Above the vignette of Gaza in the map (to its east, according to the orientation of the map) remain the letters AZA. The city is represented as one of the largest on the map, apart from Jerusalem.⁴⁸ It is depicted as from a 'bird's eye view', with buildings, stoas and roads clearly visible. Only the southern, or right-hand half of the city has survived. This is sufficient, however, to show that Gaza was laid out on a Roman city plan, with main streets running north/south and east/west, crossing in the centre. These streets are lined with stoas, represented by white columns and red roofs, and apparently lead to gates in the city walls. In the centre of the city, where the streets meet, is a large rectangular open space, an ἀγορά, or forum. The most recent photographs of the map, after its restoration in 1965, show some sort of structure, possibly with a domed roof, in the middle of the forum. Perhaps this was the elaborate clock, which is said to have stood in the centre of Gaza, marking the hours both by a bell and by moving bronze figures, representing Helios appearing in each of the twelve doors in turn, and Heracles performing his labours.⁴⁹ Other, smaller fora are visible in the south-east quarter of the city. The sixth century orator, Choricus, mentions the fora of Gaza and their use for public entertainments in the many festivals organised by the city.⁵⁰

In the top south-east corner of the city, apparently outside the wall, is a large semi-circular structure. This may be intended for a theatre⁵¹, but it has the red border that normally represents a tiled roof, and the black and white pattern inside it may be intended for columns, although it is true that columns are depicted more accurately elsewhere. There are two similar semi-circular structures on the map, one at the Church of St. Zachariah, very similar to the Gaza one, except that the columns are more clearly represented⁵², and one at Diospolis, which is less regular, and does not have the empty semi-circular 'orchestra' visible in the other two cases⁵³. Avi-Yonah describes the first as a semi-circular court, surrounded by a peristyle⁵⁴, and the second as a colonnaded road curving round a church.⁵⁵ There is only one other figure on the map which probably represents a theatre. In the vignette of Neapolis, at the southern end of the main north-south road, is a structure depicted as three concentric arcs on an orange background. This was earlier identified as a Roman fountain-house in a still-standing barrel-vaulted building, but recent excavations have revealed a theatre in this position, and it appears that this must be what is represented on the map⁵⁶. The figure is, however, very different from the one at Gaza and does not look as if it depicts the same sort of structure. The identification of the structure at Gaza with a theatre cannot, therefore, be taken for granted.

In the lower, south-west quarter of the city appears a large building, which Avi-Yonah describes as a cruciform church, though there is no indication of the eastern transept, and identifies with the Eudoxiana, built between 402 and 408⁵⁷. (It might be expected that the magnificent churches of St. Sergius and St. Stephen, built in the region of Justinian, would have been depicted, but they both seem to have stood in the north-west quarter of Gaza, St. Stephen's being apparently outside the city walls, and that part of the map has not survived.⁵⁸) Avi-Yonah notes that the Eudoxiana

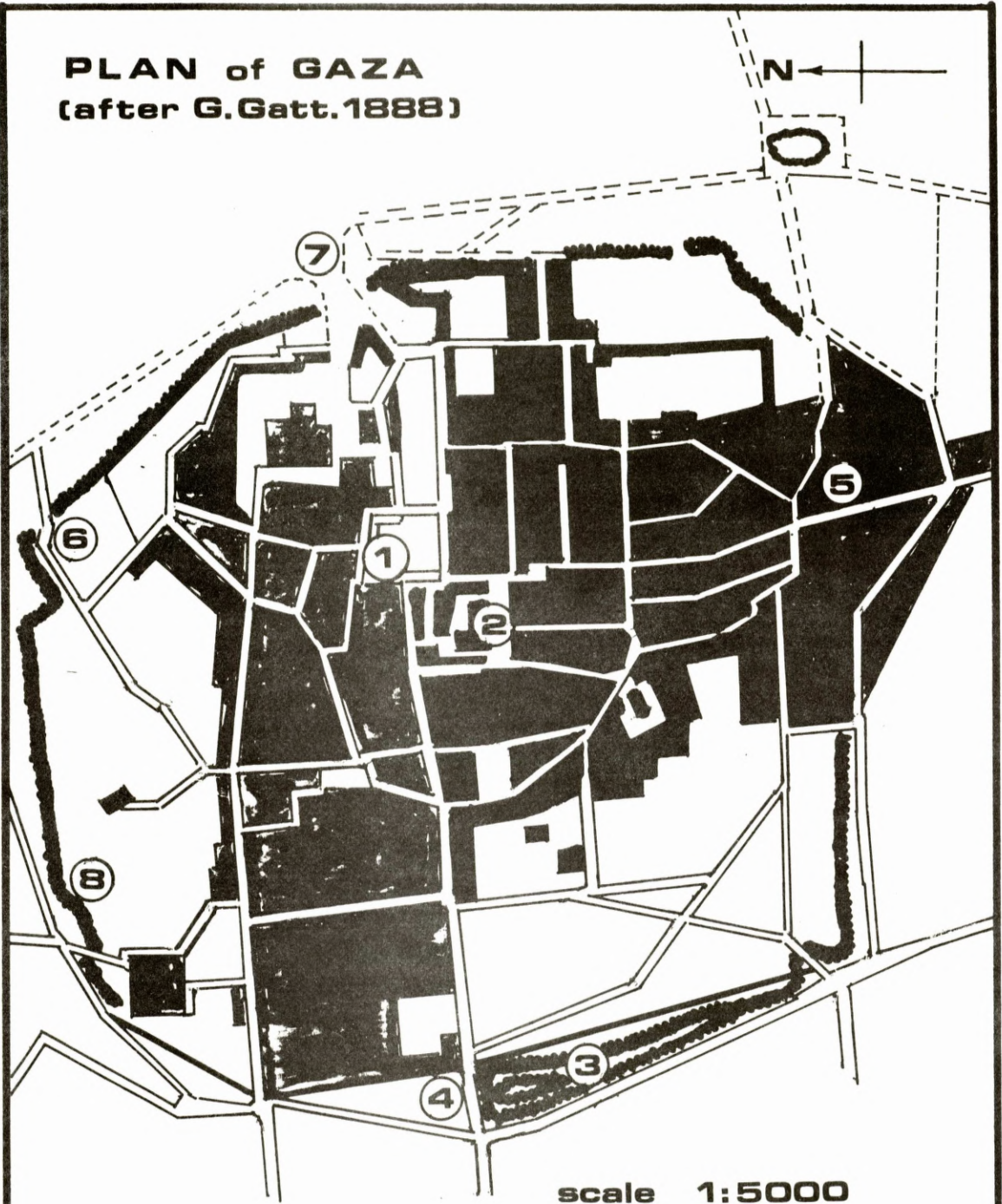


PART of ---
 THE MADEBA MAP
 --- showing GAZA

(after PALMER and GUTHE 1906)

dpp

PLAN of GAZA
(after G.Gatt.1888)



- key:-**
- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1 | Great Mosque |
| 2 | Central market |
| 3 | Tell es-seken |
| 4 | Bab maimas |
| 5 | Bab ed-darom |
| 6 | Bab askalan |
| 7 | Bab el-chalil |
| 8 | City wall |

app

occupied the site of the earlier temple of Marnas, the patron god of Gaza, and remarks that the pictured church occupies a space corresponding to that of the ancient tell in modern Gaza. It is an interesting idea that the church, and the earlier temple, could have been built on the tell. If so, would it have been a question of utilising an open space, and one the elevation of which would have made the temple more impressive, or was it a return to an ancient site, the sanctity of which had never been forgotten? The description in Marcus Diaconus gives, however, no hint that the temple was on a mound or elevated above the rest of the city⁵⁹.

There is, moreover, an alternative possible site for the Marneion and later Eudoxiana. A comparison between the Madeba Map and the street plan of Gaza drawn up by Gatt in 1887 displays a considerable degree of similarity, most strikingly in the basic street plan⁶⁰. The main north/south and east/west roads have clearly remained unchanged, but even the large central forum of the Madeba Map is still visible on Gatt's plan. Though partly built over, it still appears to be used as the central market of the town, most of its narrow lanes being marked as suk. To the north-east of this forum on the Madeba Map is depicted a smaller rectangular open space, with a roofed portico around three sides. In the same position on Gatt's plan is a similar rectangle with buildings around three sides. What is of particular interest is that the largest building on the west of this open space is the Jamia el-Kabir, the Great Mosque of Gaza⁶¹. The mosque was converted from the twelfth century Crusader Church of St. John the Baptist, but contains older materials, notably columns, which could have been taken from an earlier, Byzantine church⁶². Considering the perseverance of the ancient arrangement of buildings and open spaces in this area, and the normal tendency for a sacred site to remain in use, despite changes in religion, it seems possible that there is here an example of this continuity and that the present Great Mosque of Gaza stands on the site of the original temple of Marnas⁶³. (Perhaps it is also worth noting that Marcus Diaconus mentions the πλατεῖα laid out before the new church and paved with marble slabs from the Marneion)⁶⁴.

As for the large church in the south-west quarter of Gaza on the Madeba Map, it should be noted that there is no reason to assume that the Eudoxiana and the churches of St. Sergius and St. Stephen were the only important ones in Gaza. Choricus mentions the last two because they were new, and others (the Old Church and the Church of the Apostles) because they were in need of repair. He does not mention the Eudoxiana and could well have passed over others.

A hint at the existence and site of the church in the south-west quarter may perhaps be found in Guérin's work⁶⁵. He describes the traces of a ruin known as Khirbet Bab ed-Daroum, a little to the south of the southern gate of the town. This was the remains of a large rectangular building, almost completely destroyed in the search for building materials, although one granite column was still visible, lying on the ground. The local inhabitants, he reports, claimed that this building had originally been a church, was then converted into a mosque and was finally demolished completely. This may perhaps be a little too far outside the city to be the church that appears on the Madeba Map, but the walls and gates visible in the nineteenth century were those of the Crusader town and the Byzantine city may well have been larger.

Immediately below the picture of Gaza on the Madeba Map is a damaged inscription, the remains of which read: KAINEA
ΛΙΣ

This is normally taken as referring to the port town Maioumas and is completed: [Μαιουμας ἡ]καὶ Νεα[πό]λις⁶⁶. But this reading seems to me to be far from certain. Against it may be argued the fact that no other source gives the name Neapolis to Maioumas. The only alternative name for Maioumas in the literary sources is Constantia, bestowed upon the town by Constantine the Great, when he elevated it to the status of a polis⁶⁷, but Sozomen specifically states that, when Constantine's grant was repealed by Julian, the town was once again known by its original name of Maioumas, and so it appears in Jerome, Marcus Diaconus, Antoninus and other sources⁶⁸.

It could be argued that the name Neapolis had been adopted by the people of Maioumas in honour of their short-lived elevation to city-status, but it does not seem very likely that this brief interlude of freedom should still be celebrated by the time the map was made, about two hundred years later. In any case, it is surely the name Constantia, the personal grant of the Emperor, that would have been preserved, rather than the less individual Neapolis.

Apart from these historical considerations, it is by no means clear from the map itself that the inscription refers to Maioumas. The town itself is apparently depicted on the map. The small surviving fragment of a vignette of a town immediately below Gaza (to the west of it) must be intended for Maioumas. The fragment shows a number of red-roofed buildings and a wide street joining it at a right angle. The town does not appear to be walled, but a gate is shown at the end of the main street. The fact that Maioumas is given this detailed depiction and not merely represented as a two or three-towered gateway, as are most of the smaller towns and villages on the map, is good evidence for its size and importance in the Byzantine period.

The inscription itself does not lie next to the picture of the town, but is far closer to that of Gaza. There is only one row of plain yellow tesserae between the wall of Gaza and the top of the letters of the inscription, while there are about five rows of tesserae (not all of the rows run in the same direction) between the bottom of the letters and the top of the buildings of Maioumas. There is no other instance on the map of an inscription which is so far distant from the town to which it refers. The only possible other case is that of Diospolis, where the inscription overlaps the vignette of the town at each end and thus leaves a considerable space between the letters and the lower buildings at the edges of the city.⁶⁹ It is of course possible that, in the missing part of the vignette of Maioumas, the buildings rose sharply towards the inscription, but that seems rather unlikely. The cities depicted on the map normally appear as more or less regularly oval in shape, even Diospolis, the outline of which is more irregular than most.

There are, therefore, grounds for discussing the possibility that this inscription refers not to Maioumas, but to Gaza itself. It must be said that it is unusual on the map to have an inscription placed underneath the picture to which it refers. But there is one example: on the same section of the map, some distance above (to the east of) Gaza, lies the village of Gerara, represented by a small two-towered gate-way. Above it is the name ΓΕΡΑΡΑ and immediately below it the inscription:

ΓΕΡΑΡΑΒΑΣΙΔΙΚΗΠΟΤΕΠΟΛΙΣΤΩΝ
 ΦΥΛΙΣΤΙΑΙΩΝΚΑΙΟΡΙΟΝΤΩΝΧΑΝΑ
 ΝΑΙΩΝΤΟΠΡΟΣΝΟΤΟΝΕΝΘΑΤΟ 70.
 ΓΕΡΑΡΙΤΙΚΟΝ

This long inscription, like others in this section, may be intended to help fill in the empty spaces of the Negev, but it does show that it is not impossible for an exploratory note, giving further information about a place, to be added beneath its picture.

If the practice of the mosaicist makes it possible that the inscription could refer to Gaza, it is also necessary to consider its completion and whether a reasonable meaning applying to Gaza can be deduced from it. The partial completion: ΚΑΙΝΕΑ

ΠΟΛΙΣ seems certain. It is extremely difficult to think of any word other than πόλις that would give any sense at all. Then it must be asked whether there could be any reason for referring to Gaza as a νέα πόλις. The answer could lie in the tradition that Gaza was once deserted and rebuilt on a different site, which, as I suggested, was probably not very far from the original one, so that eventually the old and new cities could have combined. This tradition must have been known to the designer of the map. He would certainly have been familiar with the reference in the Acts to 'Desert Gaza' (test... E, p. above). Jerome's remark on the rebuilding of Gaza on a new site (test. A, above) also bears witness to the general awareness of this tradition in the Byzantine period. The Onomasticon of Eusebius was a basic source for the place-names recorded on the map, but there is no evidence that Jerome's Latin version with its additions and corrections was also used. Nevertheless, the Onomasticon was not an exclusive source⁷¹, and the information could have reached the map designer either directly from Jerome, or from elsewhere.

I suggest, therefore, that the inscription underneath the picture of Gaza on the Madeba Map could have read: ΗΕΡΗΜΟΣΚΑΙΝΕΑ
 ([ἡ ἔρημος] καὶ νέα [πό]λις) ΠΟΛΙΣ
 or some similar formula. It is true that in most places where an inscription comprises two or more lines of text, the left hand margin is usually more or less straight and the second line is not inset, but examples do occur in the inscriptions: ΘΕΡΜΑΚΑΛΛΙ and ΑΛΩΝΑΤΑΘΗΝΥΝ 72.
 ΡΟΗΣ ΒΗΘΑΓΛΑ

This suggestion cannot be proved and may be mistaken, but I think the possibility that the inscription refers to Gaza is at least strong enough to throw some doubt on the accepted reading, relating the inscription to Maioumas. At any rate, the assertion of Avi-Yonah that Maioumas was regularly also known as Neapolis or, for more than a brief period, as Constantia, seems highly dubious.⁷³

The Madeba Map is also evidence for some of the other small towns and villages surrounding Gaza, and for one important church, that of St. Victor, shown on the map as a rectangular building with a portico in front of it, situated between Gaza and Maioumas, together with an inscription reading:

ΟΤΟΥΑΓΙΟΥ
 ΒΙΚΤΟΡΟΣ

The church is mentioned by Antoninus Placentinus, who writes:

exinde venimus in civitatem

Maioma Gazis, in qua requiescit sanctus Victor Martyr.⁷⁴

This raises the question whether the church was actually situated outside the walls but still considered to be part of the town, or whether it was inside, but the map-maker chose to represent it as outside the town, so that he had space to record its name. This does not seem to be his usual practice. In the picture of Jerusalem⁷⁵ the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Nea are both represented in their correct positions, as are the large church in the south-west quarter of Gaza and several others. So the first alternative seems more probable. St. Victor's may perhaps be identified with the monastery described in the biography of Petrus Iberus, a fifth century bishop of Gaza, as lying between Gaza and Maioumas.⁷⁶

Slightly to the south of Gaza is depicted a small, square tower with the inscription ΘΑΥΑΘΑ. This must be identified with the village of Thavatha, or Tabatha, mentioned by Jerome as the birthplace of the monk Hilarion:

Hilarion ortus vico Tabatha, qui circiter quinque millia a Gaza urbe Palaestinae ad Austrum situs est.⁷⁷

It has usually been identified with the מגדל תותח mentioned in the Life of Petrus Iberus⁷⁸ but it has recently been argued that the latter place was not a free village, but a private estate, presumably bordering on the village of Thavatha, but not identical with it.⁷⁹ Sozomen describes Thavatha as to the south of Gaza and on the bank of a stream that flowed into the sea.⁸⁰ Abel's identification of it with the modern Khirbet Umm el-Tut, on the south bank of the Wadi Gaza, has been generally accepted.⁸¹

Other villages represented on the map as close to Gaza are Edrain, which Abel identifies with the ruins known as Khirbet el-'Adar, seven kilometres south of Gaza, on the bank of the Wadi Gaza,⁸² and Asalea, depicted as a three-towered gateway. Only the letters ΑΛΕΑ have survived from the name, but there seems no reason to doubt the completion. Sozomen mentions Asalea as the home of the holy man Alaphion.⁸² Abel identifies it with the modern Nazle, a few kilometres to the north-east of Gaza, and this has been generally accepted.⁸⁴

D: THE TERRITORY OF GAZA.

Like all poleis, the city of Gaza controlled a stretch of the surrounding countryside and the villages within it. But there is too little evidence to establish the borders of this territory with any certainty.⁸⁵ One very late source, a mediaeval manuscript of ecclesiastical notitiae known as the Tacticon, states that the northern border of Gaza was the Wadi Husi (Nahal Shiqma) between Gaza and Ascalon.⁸⁶ This sounds plausible, but it should be noted that the town of Anthedon could not, as Avi-Yonah claims,⁸⁷ have been included in this territory, as it was an independent polis minting its own coins.⁸⁸ It must have formed an enclave with a territory of its own, presumably along the coast. The rest of the information in the Tacticon is less useful and clearly derives from a later period,⁸⁹ but it does include the information that the bishopric of Anthedon was also known as Maioumas.⁹⁰ This suggests that the sees of these two adjacent towns were combined. It is possible that this

took place during the sixth century, when Maioumas disappeared from the various ecclesiastical lists. Whether this also had implications for the civil status of the town, which, until the fifth century at least, had been dependent on Gaza, is unclear.⁹¹

Apart from Maioumas, Thavatha was also dependent on Gaza and it is likely that Asalea was within its territory as well since Bethlelea, a little to its north-east, and so further from the city, was certainly included. Sozomen mentions: Βηθελέαν κώμην τοῦ νομοῦ Γάζης and, a little later, Χαφαρχοβραν κώμην Γαζαίων. Of Kfarchobra nothing more is known, but Bethlelea is mentioned again by Sozomen, whose ancestral home it was. He recounts how his grandfather, together with all his household, was converted to Christianity by Hilarion ἐν Βηθηλεῖα κώμῃ Γάζης, which he describes as a well populated village, possessing several temples, greatly venerated by the inhabitants for their antiquity and furnishing. Prominent among them was a Pantheon, on the summit of an artificial mound and dominating the whole village. The name Bethlelea, Sozomen suggests, was derived from the Semitic בֵּית לַיהוָה, with reference to this Pantheon.⁹²

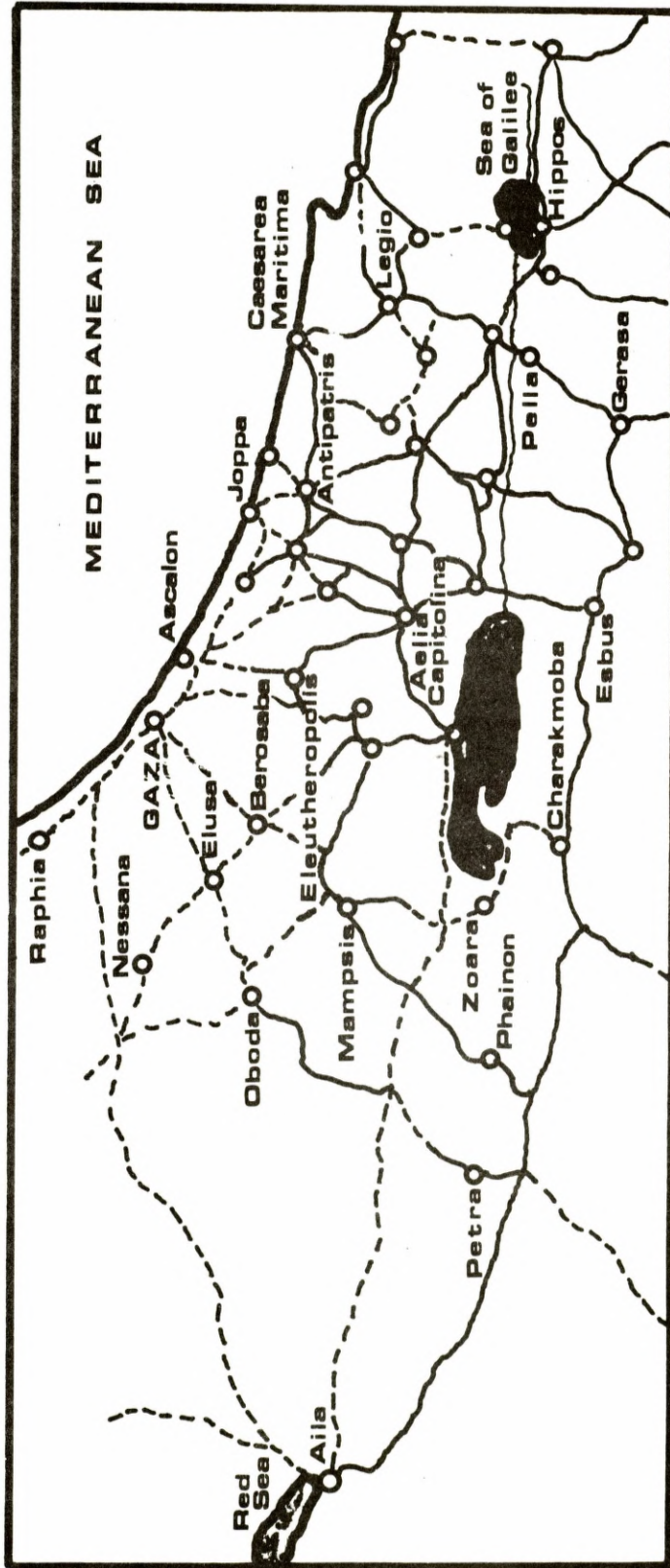
There has been considerable confusion,⁹³ partly brought about by textual difficulties in the sources, between Bethlelea and Bitylion on the coast between Raphia and Rhinocolura, which appears on the Madaba Map, and is mentioned by Sozomen and Jerome.⁹⁴ This confusion was clarified by Alt and Abel,⁹⁵ but was perpetuated by Avi-Yonah, who ignores Sozomen's references and the articles of Alt and Abel, despite citing them.⁹⁶

Bethlelea may be identified with Beit Lahia to the north-east of Gaza, described by Guérin as a small village in a valley surrounded by sand-dunes.⁹⁷ The identification was first made in the Survey of Western Palestine, where it is suggested that the small village mosque occupies the site of the ancient Pantheon.⁹⁸ Abel, who accepts this identification, reports seeing in Beit Lahia ruins used by the inhabitants for building materials and two small tells, sprinkled with Byzantine and Arab sherds.⁹⁹

E: THE ROAD SYSTEM.

As an important trading centre, Gaza stood at the hub of an extensive road network. Some of these roads were extremely ancient, having existed since before the start of recorded history; others were more recent. The Roman provincial government paid considerable attention to the building and maintenance of an elaborate road system, being primarily motivated by military considerations: the necessity of being able to move troops quickly in order to put down insurrections and maintain order. For this purpose existing roads throughout the province were gradually levelled and paved and new ones built. Where necessary, bridges and supporting terraces were constructed and the roads equipped with mile-stones, road-stations and guard-posts.¹⁰⁰

The most important, and probably the oldest, of Gaza's roads was the great highway that ran from north to south along the coast, linking Syria with Egypt. It is not known when this road was first paved by the Romans. A mile-stone has been found which dates the paving of its northern section, from Antioch to Ptolemais, to the year AD 56,¹⁰¹ but there is no reason to assume that the rest of the road was completed at that time. Apart from one exception, dated to the year 69 and clearly associated with the First Revolt, the earliest mile-stones found in the Province of Judaea are dated



Scale approx 1:2000000

GAZA IN THE ROMAN ROAD SYSTEM
 (after A.M.Nijes 1983)

dpp

to the reign of Hadrian. It appears that it was he who first ordered the construction of a Roman road network in the province. All the Hadrianic mile-stones found so far mark roads of crucial military importance at the time of their installation, and it is likely that these roads were then paved for the first time.¹⁰² It is not known whether existing roads were also included in this reorganization and brought up to Roman standards, but this is probable.^{102a}

The other main road from Gaza to the north and centre of the province was that leading to Eleutheropolis and on to Jerusalem. It is known that the section from Jerusalem to Eleutheropolis was built in the year 130, at the time when Hadrian was planning the building of his new colony on the ruins of Jerusalem,¹⁰³ but there is no evidence to show when the continuation to Gaza was built. Hadrian visited Gaza in 130, but it is not known which route he used.¹⁰⁴ A recent survey has shown that the road from Eleutheropolis to Gaza did not lead directly from the city, but branched off the Eleutheropolis-Hebron road about two miles to the south, turning to the west. Remains of small Roman forts, or watch-towers, have been found along this section of the road. It is assumed that the road did not run directly to Gaza, but followed the course of the Nahal Shiqma, joining the coastal highway some miles south of Ascalon.¹⁰⁵

Apart from these two roads, three other main routes branched out from Gaza, all leading south and east, across the Negev desert. The most northerly of the three led through Berosaba to Mampsis, where it branched, one route then leading to Zoara, a little to the south of the Dead Sea, and then to Charakmoba to its east, and the other further south to the copper mines of Phainon and then on to link up with the Via Nova Traiana, running north from Aila through the Provincia Arabia.

The second, perhaps the oldest and certainly the most important, of these roads led from Gaza to Elusa, Oboda and on to Petra, where it connected directly with the route leading down to the south of the Arabian peninsula. This was the ancient spice route, used by trading caravans at least from the Persian period.¹⁰⁶

The third route, branching off the coastal highway a little to the south of Gaza, led through Elusa and Nessana, round the western edge of the Negev highlands, south to Aila. This was also an ancient route. Archaeological discoveries in the Aila area suggest trade with the Mediterranean, presumably conducted through Gaza, in the Persian period.¹⁰⁷ Findings along the road itself date from the Early Bronze Age onwards. It was used by the Nabataeans and fortified during the Roman-Byzantine period.¹⁰⁸

Ancient evidence for the roads of the Negev can be found in the Madaba Map and the Tabula Peutingeriana. It is true that the Madaba Map does not mark roads as such, but it is clear that most of the smaller places that appear on the map do so because they are situated along roads.¹⁰⁹ It is noticeable that all the main stations on the northern road from Gaza to Charakmoba, Berosaba, Mampsis, Zoara and Charakmoba itself, are marked on the map, as is Elusa, the first important station on the second road, and it is reasonable to assume that the original map in its undamaged state included such towns as Oboda, Petra and Aila, and some of the stations between them.

The Tabula Peutingeriana is a mediaeval copy of an ancient road map of the Roman Empire.¹¹⁰ In its earliest form it appears to date from the

early third century AD, but it was revised and brought up to date in the reign of Theodosius II in the fifth century.¹¹¹ It was apparently an official document in origin, drawn up for the use of the cursus publicus and gives information on the distances between towns, mansiones and other facilities.¹¹²

The map records two roads through the Negev, both leading from Elusa, one through Oboda to Aila, and the other to Petra, both with intermediate stations marked along their lengths. The identification of these roads and their stations has given rise to a certain amount of discussion.¹¹³

The position is complicated by the fact that Gaza and the roads leading from it do not appear on the map at all. Gaza is not even recorded as a station on the coastal highway, though its position appears to be marked by a hook in the line of the road, the usual indication of a road station, between Ascalon and Rhinocolura, which are marked. Possibly the name was omitted for reasons of space, though there is, in fact, room for a short name like Gaza, and it should be noted that this stretch of road is marked with the numeral xv, which indicates the distance in miles between Ascalon and Gaza. It is possible that the omission of the name is simply an error, either by the original map-maker, or by a later copyist.¹¹⁴ The omission on the map of the Gaza-Petra road has led to the suggestion that it was not recorded because it was not in use at the time at which the map was drawn up.¹¹⁵ But there is no need for this assumption. Apart from the coastal highway and the Via Nova Traiana, the majority of the roads on the map are those leading to Jerusalem. Very few east-west roads connecting other towns of the province have been recorded, and the omission of the Petra-Gaza road only fits this general pattern.

Of the Negev roads, the Petra-Gaza road is the best known and the most controversial. It was first discovered and explored by Frank, Alt and Glueck in the 1930s,¹¹⁶ and more recently the section between Avdat (Oboda) and Sha'ar Ramon has been surveyed in detail by Meshel and Tsafir.¹¹⁷

The road was unpaved, but cleared of stones and marked with kerb-stones, in some sections. Retaining walls were built where needed and the road was marked at intervals with uninscribed mile-stones. A number of small forts was built along the line of the road, as were water reservoirs, and a large hostel for travellers has been found at Sha'ar Ramon, a day's journey east of Oboda.¹¹⁸

The controversy over the Petra-Gaza road is concerned with its date. Since 1938 scholars have followed Kirk¹¹⁹ in stating that the only pottery found in the waystations along the road is Nabataean, and cannot be later than the early part of the second century AD.¹²⁰ As a consequence of this, it was assumed that the road and its installations were built and maintained by the Nabataeans, and abandoned after the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom by the Romans in the year 106.¹²¹

It has, however, been pointed out that the road construction and, in particular, the installation of milestones are typically Roman features, and that it is implausible to assume that the Nabataeans could have imitated Roman road-building techniques at a time when there was no Roman road within several hundred miles of Nabataea.¹²² More recently, excavations in a number of waystations in the section of the road between the Ramon Crater and the Aravah have produced evidence, both pottery and coins, for the

continued use of the road into the third, or even fourth centuries.¹²³ These findings have made it clear that there is no difficulty in attributing the Roman features of the road to the period after 106, and the redating has important implications for the continuation of the spice trade through Gaza, and for the history of the Negev in general.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1.

1. Atlas of Israel I/11.
2. Atlas of Israel II/3.
3. Guérin II, 179; SWP III, 234-235.
4. SWP III, 238; ARP 434.
5. Atlas of Israel IV/2, mean average rainfall map.
6. SWP III, 235, 15 wells are mentioned.
7. Atlas of Israel V/1, catchment areas map.
8. Robinson, 372, 375-376; Guérin II, 178; SWP III, 235.
9. Robinson, 376; Guérin II, 178-179; ARP, 398-418 on inscriptions, 430-433 on other antiquities; SWP III, 248-251.
10. Guérin II, 178; See also the plan by G. Gatt, ZDPV II (1888), 148-149.
11. SWP III, 248.
12. Robinson, 375; Meyer, 106.
13. The landing-stage was evidently built after 1906, as Meyer does not mention it. He reports that in 1905 large ships anchored offshore at Gaza and merchandise was conveyed to and from them in small boats. Even under these conditions a considerable volume of trade passed through Gaza at that time. Meyer mentions exports, mostly of agricultural produce, to the value of U.S. \$ 1,500,000, and imports worth U.S. \$750,000.
14. Ptolemy V, 15,2; Strabo, 16,2,30.
15. See p. 23 and n. 68 below.
16. D. Mackenzie, PEFQSt. 1918, 73-74. SWP III, 251, reports of El Kishany, between Gaza and the shore: 'It seems probable that ruins of a walled town may here be covered by the sand. Marble slabs and other fragments are dug up by the peasantry'.
17. A. Ovadiah, Qadmoniot I (1968), 124-127 (Hebrew). Note the sketch-map on p. 124, indicating the position of the synagogue in relation to the landing-stage and the road to Gaza. See also idem, IEJ 19 (1969), 193-198; IEJ 27 (1977), 176-178.
18. Gatt, loc.cit. n. 10 above.
19. Phythian-Adams, PEFQSt. 1923, 14-17. Apparently, the use of the port had declined considerably since Meyer's visit, no doubt as a result of the damage inflicted on Gaza and the surrounding area during the First World War.

20. Atlas of Israel IV/2, mean average rainfall map. Rafah receives 200-300 mm. p.a.
21. Abel, RB 48 (1939), 209.
- 21a. Diod. XX, 74,1.
22. See Introduction, p. 2 above.
23. See Ch. 4, pp. 93-94.
24. According to Hudson's praefatio, the fragment is part of an unknown geographical work extant in a MS in Paris and bearing some unclear relationship to the Orbis Descriptio of Dionysius Periegetes.
25. E.g. Robinson, Bib. Researches, 380; Physical Geography of the Holy Land, 108-109; Meyer, 10.
26. Stark, Gaza und die Philistäische Küste, 510-511; G.A. Smith, The Historical Geography of the Holy Land, 136-137 and n.6.
27. See Ch. 2, pp. 38-39, for a discussion of the era of Gaza and the possibility that rebuilding may have started earlier.
28. Arrian does, however, exaggerate the height of the mound on which Gaza stood. See A.B. Bosworth, A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander (Oxford 1980) ad loc.
29. PEFQSt. 1923, 18-30.
30. Marc. Diac. 18.
31. Stark, 509-513.
32. Meyer, 9-11.
33. PEFQSt. 1923, 30-36.
34. PEFQSt. 1923, 12-13.
35. PEQFSt. 1923, 34.
36. PEQFSt. 1923, 34-35.
37. Smith, 36-37.
38. Flinders Petrie, Ancient Gaza I-IV (London 1930-1934); O. Tufnell, EAEHL I, 52-61.
39. Abel, RB 44 (1935), 567-575; Géog. de la Palestine II, 403.
41. Meyer, 10.
42. Schürer² II, 101-102, n. 77.
43. Jericho: Schürer² II, 194 n. 42. Beit-She'an/Scythopolis: ibid. 142-143; EAEHL I, 209. At Beit-She'an the tell was not totally deserted.

44. Phythian-Adams found large quantities of Roman and Byzantine sherds in his excavation there, PEQFSt. 1923, 12; 23-24.
45. M. Avi-Yonah, The Madeba Mosaic Map (henceforward MM); H. Donners & H. Cüppers, Die Mosaikkarte von Madeba (henceforward Mosaikkarte).
46. MM, 16-18.
47. MM, 28-32.
48. Gaza: MM, 74-75, Pl. 9; Mosaikkarte, 158, 159. Other large cities depicted in detail on the map are Pelusium, Kerakmoab, Ascalon, Eleutheropolis, Diospolis, Azotus Paralius and Jamnia.
49. Mosaikkarte, 158, 159. The clock is described in an ecphrasis originally ascribed to Choricius, but C. Kirsten, Quaestiones Choricianae 46-59, esp. 58-59, showed through an analysis of clausulae that it was more probably composed by Procopius of Gaza. See Stark, 601-603; N.G. Wilson, Scholars of Byzantium, 31.
50. Choricius, Laud. Marc. I, 83-89; Laud. Marc. II, 60-69. See Ch.2, p. 53.
51. Avi-Yonah, MM 74, suggests a theatre or a nymphaeum.
52. MM, Pl. 8; Mosaikkarte, 152.
53. MM, Pl. 7; Mosaikkarte, 148, 149.
54. MM, 68.
55. MM, 61-62.
56. Neapolis on the Madeba Map: MM, Pl. 6, p. 45; Mosaikkarte, 145. For the identification of the semicircular structure with a fountain-house, see: Abel. RB 32 (1923), 120-132, esp. 125-126. On the recently discovered theatre: Y. Magen, 'Hateatron haromi be-Shechem', Sefer Ze'ev Vilnay, 269-277.
57. MM, 74; Marc. Diac. 78-79, 92.
58. Choricius, Laud. Marc. I, 17 (St. Sergius); Laud. Marc. II, 28 (St. Stephen).
59. Marc. Diac. 75, 77.
60. Gatt, ZDPV II (1888), 148-149. Cf the cases of Jerusalem and Nablus, where the street-plans shown on the Madeba Map have survived until the present-day.
61. Clermont-Ganneau, ARP 384, gives a more detailed plan of the mosque and surrounding street. It is, unfortunately, very difficult to correlate his plan with Gatt's.
62. Guérin II, 180-185; SWP III, 249-250; ARP, 383-398. One column bearing a carving of a menorah and a Hebrew inscription (Appendix, no.

- 37, pp. 144-146) must have come originally from a synagogue. Clermont-Ganneau believed it had been brought to Gaza from elsewhere, possibly from Caesarea (ARP, 389-396), but the discovery of the synagogue at Maioumas has made this assumption unnecessary.
63. This was suggested by Guérin (II, 182) and Clermont-Ganneau (ARP, 396, 398).
 64. Marc. Diac., 75,6.
 65. Guérin II, 185.
 66. This reading was proposed by A. Jacoby, Das Geographische Mosaik von Madeba (Leipzig 1905), 55-56, and is followed by Avi-Yonah (MM, 74-75), but was already queried by W. Kubitschek (Zur Geschichte von Städten des Römischen Kaiserreiches, 38). He had earlier suggested this reading himself, but then changed his mind. He offers, however, no alternative reading.
 67. Sozomen, H.E. II, 5; V, 3. Eusebius, V. Const. IV, 38 (PG 20, col. 1188), reports Constantine's grant to 'Constantia in Palestine', without mentioning the previous name of the town.
 68. Sozomen, H.E. V, 3; Jerome, V.H. 3; Pereg. Paulae, 19; Theodosius, de Situ Terr. Sanct., 3, (ed. Geyer, CCL 175, 114-125); Antoninus Placentinus (ed. Geyer, CCL 175, 128-174), 33; Sophronius, S.S.Cyri et Ioannis Miracula (PG 87 III, col. 3432), iv.
 69. MM, Pl. 7; Mosaikkarte, 146.
 70. MM, Pl. 9; Mosaikkarte, 157.
 71. MM, 28-32.
 72. MM, Pl. 2, pp. 39-40; Mosaikkarte, 132, 136.
 73. Avi-Yonah, Holy Land 150. The references to ancient sources given here are confused, and do not state what he claims for them. Idem. Gazetteer, s.v. Maioumas, Constantia, Neapolis. There is no evidence for Avi-Yonah's statement that later emperors reversed Julian's cancellation of the grant of polis-status to Maioumas.
 74. Anton. Placent., 33.
 75. MM, Pl. 7, pp. 50-60; Mosaikkarte, 146.
 76. "... und kam und wohnte in der zwischen Gaza und der kleinen Stadt, Namens Majuma, gelegenen Congregation, die in jener Zeit voll von heiligen ihr Kreuz tragenden Mönchen war..." (translation of the original Syriac by R. Raabe, Petrus der Iberer, 50).
 77. Jerome, V.Hil., 2, (PL 23, col. 30).
 78. Raabe, Petrus der Iberer, 96f.

79. Y. Dan, 'On the Ownership of the Lands of the Village of Thavatha in the Byzantine Period', SCI V (1979/80), 258-262.
80. Sozomen, H.E. III, 14. Presumably the word χειμαρῶνους has here its original meaning of 'a stream that flows only in the winter', i.e. a wadi.
81. Abel, 'Le Sud Palestinien d'après la Carte Mosaïque de Madeba', PJOS 4 (1924), 107-119, esp. 116f. : idem, Géog. de la Pal. II, 480-481; Avi-Yonah, Holy Land, 151; Gazetteer, s.v. Migdal Thauth; Dan, SCI V (1979/80), 258.
82. Abel, JPOS 4 (1924), 116; SWP III, 251, reports 'ruined rubble cisterns and traces of a town. There are immense piles of broken pottery forming mounds at the site.'
83. Sozomen, H.E. III, 14.
84. Abel, JPOS 4 (1924), 115; Avi-Yonah, Gazetteer, s.v. Asalea; Guérin II, 177, reports seeing ancient marble and granite columns by the well at Nazle.
85. On the territorial divisions of Palestine, see the remarks of B.H. Isaac, Talanta XII-XIII (1980-81), 34-35 n. 13.
86. Palmer, The Desert of the Exodus, 423, 550-554; Abel, Géog. de la Pal. II, 202-205.
87. Holy Land, 150; Gazetteer, s.v. Anthedon.
88. Abel, Géog. de la Pal., 244-245; Schürer² II, 104. Josephus several times refers to Anthedon in terms suggesting that it was an independent polis: Ant. XIII, 3, 4 (395); XIV, 5, 3 (88); XV, 7, 3 (217); B.J. I, 8, 4 (166); I, 20, 3 (396).
89. It states that Oboda, Elusa and Lysa were included in the bishopric of Gaza. These places can obviously not have been part of the original city territory (being too far away and within Palaestina Tertia, not Prima), and this statement must refer to the situation after the Moslem conquest, when the impoverishment of the Church led to a simplification in ecclesiastical organisation (Abel, 202).
90. Palmer, 552; Abel, 203.
91. On the question of the bishopric of Maïoumas, see Ch. 2, pp. 43 - 44
92. Sozomen, H.E. V, 15; VI, 32.
93. See e.g. P. Thomsen, Loca Sancta, 30, s.v. Β<αθ>υλιον
94. Sozomen, H.E. VII, 28; Jerome, V.H., 30.
95. Alt, 'Bitolion und Bethelaea', ZDPV 49 (1924), 236-242; Abel, 'De Bitylion à Péluse', RB 49 (1940), 224-226; Géog. de la Pal. II, 285, s.v. Betylion.

96. Avi-Yonah, Holy Land, 151; Gazetteer, s.v. Bitolium. The references in the Gazetteer are badly confused.
97. Guérin II, 176.
98. SWP II, 176.
99. Abel, RB 49 (1940), 224-226.
100. I. Roll, 'The Roman Road System in Judaea', The Jerusalem Cathedra 3, 136-161, esp. 136-137.
101. P. Thomsen, 'Die Römischen Meilensteine der Provinzen Syria, Arabia und Palaestina', ZDPV 40 (1917), 1-103, no. 9a2.
102. B. Isaac, 'Mile-stones in Judaea from Vespasian to Constantine', PEQ 110 (1978), 47-60, esp. 49.
- 102a. Prof. S. Applebaum informs me in a private communication that "there is good evidence both in western Samaria and in 'Emeq Hephher that some ancient roads were incorporated into Roman highways." He refers to work in progress by Dr. Shimon Dar.
103. Thomsen, no. 282; Avi-Yonah, Holy Land, 184; Isaac, Talanta XII-XIII (1980/81), 46.
104. See Ch. 2, p. 41.
105. I. Roll & Y. Dagan, 'Ma'arekhet hakvishin ha roma'im seviv Beit Govrin', Shefelat-Yehuda - Leket Ma'amarim (ed. Y. Dagan, Hamador Le'yediat, Ha'aretz Bitenuat Hakibbutzim, (1983), 66.
106. See Ch. 4, pp. 91-93.
107. See Introduction, p. 3.
108. Z. Meshel, 'Toldot "Darb-el-Aza" - haderekh hakedumah le-Eilat udrom Sinai', Eretz Israel 15 (1981), 358-371.
109. Avi-Yonah, MM, 28-30; Abel, JPOS 4 (1924), 107-117, particularly the map on p. 110.
110. For the Tabula Peutingeriana in general, see: Tabula Peutingeriana, Codex Vindobonensis 324, Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe in Original-format, with Kommentar by E. Weber (Graz 1976); A. & M. Levi, Itineraria Picta (Rome 1967). On the section including Palestine, see: I. Roll, op. cit. n. 100 above, 144; Z. Meshel, 'Darkei ha-Negev lefi Ptolemaeus u-Mappat Peutinger', Hafiroh Umehkarim, Mugash le Prof. Shmu'el Yeivin (ed. Y. Aharoni), 205-209; I. Finkelstein, 'The Holy Land in the Tabula Peutingeriana: a historical-geographical approach', PEQ 111 (1979), 27-34. For the Arabian section, see G.W. Bowersock, Roman Arabia, Appendix 4, 164-186. Bowersock argues that the map derives originally from a source in the early years of the principate.

111. Weber, Kommentar, 20-23; A. & M. Levi, 173-174.
112. Weber, loc. cit. last note; A. & M. Levi, 171.
113. See Meshel, Finkelstein, opp. citt. n. 110.
114. Finkelstein, 32-33, discusses a number of similar omissions. He does not, however, mention Gaza.
115. Meshel, 209.
116. See the discussion of their findings in A. Negev, 'The Date of the Petra-Gaza Road', PEQ 98 (1966), 89-98, esp. 89-94 and the references given there.
117. Z. Meshel & Y. Tsafir, 'The Nabataean Road from 'Avdat to Sha'ar Ramon, Part I: The Survey of the Road', PEQ 106 (1974), 103-118; 'Part II: The Features of the Road', PEQ 107 (1975), 3-21.
118. Meshel & Tsafir, esp. Part I, 105-106; Part II, 3-6.
119. G.E. Kirk, 'Explorations in the Southern Desert', PEQ 70 (1938), 211-235, esp. 231-235.
120. Negev, Op. cit. n. 116 above, 96. Meshel & Tsafir do not discuss the pottery, but assume this dating throughout.
121. Meshel & Tsafir, Part II, 14-15.
122. B. Isaac, 'Trade-Routes to Arabia and the Roman Army', Roman Frontier Studies 1979, 889-892.
123. R. Cohen, 'Negev Emergency Project', IEJ 32 (1982), 263-265; idem, 'New Light on the Petra-Gaza Road', Biblical Archeologist 45 (1982), 240-247.

CHAPTER 2: THE HISTORY OF GAZA IN THE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE PERIODS

A: FROM POMPEY TO HEROD.

Gaza came under Roman rule as a result of Pompey's campaigns against the disintegrating Seleucid Empire. In the autumn of the year 63 BC he completed his conquest of Judaea by his capture of Jerusalem, and set about reorganising the new territories that had fallen under his control. As part of his new arrangements, he liberated from Jewish rule the Greek cities of Palestine that had been conquered by Alexander Jannaeus, and restored them to their own citizens, while putting them under the supervision of the governor of the new Provincia Syria.¹ Among these cities was Gaza, which had gradually become Hellenized since its conquest by Alexander of Macedon, though it is not known at what date it achieved the status of a polis.² It is an open question to what extent the city was in existence at the time of its liberation. We are told by Josephus in one passage that Gaza had been totally destroyed by Jannaeus after a year-long siege in around 96 BC.³ Yet in other places he speaks merely of Gaza and other cities being possessed by the Jews.⁴ Moreover, it has been argued that Josephus, or his source, is very hostile to Jannaeus, his account of the siege of Gaza being a striking example of this prejudice.⁵ It is possible, therefore, that the reported destruction and loss of life were exaggerated. Clearly, at the time of Pompey there were citizens of Gaza in the area, to whom the city could be restored, and there is no clear statement in Josephus' account of the restoration that the city was in ruins. Yet Gaza is reported as being among the cities rebuilt by Gabinus, who served as proconsul of Syria from 57 to 55 BC.⁶ These cities, Josephus states, had been deserted for a long time.⁷ There is, moreover, the ancient tradition that Gaza was once deserted and rebuilt on a different site, and this seems the most likely time at which this could have happened.⁸ Perhaps by the time that Pompey arrived in the area, the survivors of Jannaeus' massacre had returned and were living in patched-up houses among the ruins. But it appears that they had not yet been able to begin restoring Gaza as a polis, rebuilding the public buildings, the temples and the city wall. This, perhaps, is what was done at the command of Gabinus. As I suggested above, it is possible that at this time the ancient tell of Gaza was abandoned and the new city built at its foot, a little to the south.⁹

There is one piece of evidence, however, that suggests that the restoration of Gaza may have preceded Gabinus. The era of the Gaza calendar, in use until the end of the Byzantine period, was 28 October 61 BC. The Chronicon Paschale records under Olympiad 179/4 (61 BC): 10.

ἐντεῦθεν Γαζαῖοι τοὺς ἑαυτῶν χρόνους ἀριθμοῦσιν .

The precise date was established by Clermont-Ganneau, with the aid of a series of Byzantine epitaphs from Gaza, dated to the day of the month and year by the Gaza calendar and by the indiction.¹¹ Presumably, this date was that of some significant development in the restoration of the city. But it is too late to refer to any act of Pompey's, since he returned to Rome in 62, and too early for Gabinus, who was appointed proconsul only in 57. The governor of Syria in the years 61-60 was Marcius Philippius. Perhaps he also urged the citizens of the ruined cities to rebuild them.¹² Or perhaps the inhabitants themselves, encouraged by Pompey's restoration of their freedom, set about the reconstruction on their own initiative.

Gaza, then, was rebuilt at around this time, not far from the old city, the ruins of which no doubt provided a ready supply of building materials. How long it took for the city to be reconstructed and for a full and prosperous civic life to be revived, it is impossible to say. Certainly, the turbulent years that followed cannot have been favourable to a newly restored city, struggling to re-establish itself and recover its old prosperity. Josephus says, however, that from the time of Gabinius onwards the cities were securely inhabited,¹³ which suggests that they had succeeded in recovering, at least to the extent that their future existence was no longer in doubt, before being overwhelmed by the long period of instability and oppression brought about by the Roman civil wars, largely fought in the eastern provinces and paid for by the provincials' taxes,¹⁴ the Parthian invasion of Syria in 40 BC, and the continual fighting of the last Hasmonaeans, both between themselves and against Antipater and his sons. In 40 BC Herod was appointed King of Judaea by the Roman Senate, at the instigation of Antony and Octavian,¹⁵ but did not gain effective control over his kingdom until 37, when, with the help of the Roman general Sosius, he captured Jerusalem from Antigonus.

One passage in Josephus suggests that Gaza may have come under Herod's control during the early part of his reign. Josephus reports that Herod appointed Costobarus as governor (ἄρχων) of Idumaea and Gaza, and married him to his sister Salome. Costobarus' ambition led him to offer to hand over his territory to Cleopatra.¹⁶ This plan failed and as a result Costobarus incurred Herod's ill-will, though he spared his life for his sister's sake, until Salome divorced him, probably in 27 BC, when he had him put to death.¹⁷ There is, however, no evidence as to the circumstances under which Herod came into possession of Gaza, though A.H.M. Jones suggests that it and other cities may have been awarded to him by Antony.¹⁸ On the other hand, Momigliano states: '.... Gaza could not have been Herod's till after 30. The phrase ἄρχων τῆς Ἰδουμαίας καὶ Γάζης, though referring to 37 BC, reflects the position after 30'.¹⁹ Moreover, Josephus' language in the passage where he records the grant of territories to Herod by Octavian in 31 suggests that Gaza had not formerly been part of the kingdom of Herod.²⁰

At any rate, even if Gaza had been granted to Herod by Antony, he cannot have held it long, possibly for only a few months, for Gaza was, presumably, among the cities of the coastal plain from Egypt to the river Eleutherus in the north of Phoenicia, except for Tyre and Sidon, awarded by Antony to Cleopatra in 37/6, before he set out on his campaign against the Parthians.²¹

After the Battle of Actium in 31, Herod hastened to meet and ingratiate himself with Octavian on Rhodes, and was confirmed by him in his kingdom.²² He subsequently accompanied and entertained Octavian on his journey from Syria to Egypt and, after the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra, visited him there. On this occasion he was received with high favour and many gifts were bestowed on him. The parts of his kingdom that had been given by Antony to Cleopatra were returned to him, and he was awarded in addition the cities of Gadara, Hippos, Samaria, Gaza, Anthedon, Joppa and Strato's Tower.²³

Gaza, then, finally became part of Herod's kingdom in 30 BC, whether or not he had briefly held it earlier. At whatever date it took place, his appointment of Costobarus as archon of both Idumaea and Gaza would make sense. Gaza was the most important city in the Idumaeen region and its

only port. It also shows that, despite Gaza's status as a polis, Herod did not intend to allow it much autonomy and was resolved to keep it firmly under his control. He does not seem to have shown Gaza any special favour and there is no record that it was ever included in his ambitious building programme that benefited so many cities, both within his kingdom and outside his borders.²⁴ There was, of course, no reason for him to develop Gaza. He was building his own port at Caesarea in the heart of his kingdom, and would not wish to encourage competition to it. Moreover, Gaza had close links with Herod's bitter rivals, the Nabataeans, and for that reason must have been suspect to him. It is, perhaps, not surprising that he wished to keep it under the supervision of a reliable officer, with whom he had close family ties. In the event, Costobarus proved disloyal, and Josephus does not say whether he was replaced. But it is reasonable to assume that Herod continued to feel the need of someone he could trust in charge of Gaza.

B: THE FIRST TO THIRD CENTURIES.

When Herod died in 4 BC, Augustus divided his kingdom between his sons. As part of the new arrangement, he removed Gaza, along with two other Greek cities, Gadara and Hippos, and, in Josephus' words: Συρίας προσθήκην ποιεῖται.²⁵ This apparently means that the cities were attached to the province as a kind of annexe. The same phrase is used of the province of Judaea, created after the deposition of Archelaus in AD 6 and placed under the supervision of the governor of Syria.²⁶ There is evidence that later in the first century the group of cities in Transjordan known as the Decapolis formed a similar subordinate administrative unit.²⁷ Since Gadara and Hippos were cities of the Decapolis, it is possible that the others were also organized into this 'annexe' at the same time, but there is no evidence for this.²⁸ Gaza, however, was not part of the Decapolis, but lay far to its south and west, and the reasons for its annexation are not clear. Josephus says simply that it, and Gadara and Hippos, were Greek cities,²⁹ but there were several others that remained under Jewish control. Possibly the people of Gaza had found the supervision of Herod's archon oppressive, and had appealed to the Roman authorities to be released from it. Or perhaps the initiative came from the Roman side, prompted by the desire to exercise more direct control over the spice trade conducted through Gaza and the customs duties levied there.³⁰ It would be interesting to know whether a Roman official was appointed to supervise the affairs of Gaza, and how the authority of the governor of Syria was exercised there, but on these points we have no information at all. One hint at the city's altered status can be seen in the fact that at this time it recommenced minting its own bronze coinage, for the first time since its destruction by Jannaeus.³¹

While there is no evidence, it seems likely that Gaza was not included in the sub-province of Judaea established in AD 6, the kingdom of Herod Agrippa in 41, or the province re-established after his death in 44, but remained attached to the Province of Syria throughout this period.

It is hard to say how badly Gaza was affected by the outbreak of the Jewish Revolt in AD 66. Josephus says that Gaza and Anthedon were completely destroyed by the Jews, that many of their surrounding villages were also ravaged, and that many people were killed.³² But the city coinage of Gaza continued uninterrupted throughout the period of the revolt.³³ It seems likely, therefore, that Josephus' account is exaggerated, and that, though Gaza and its neighbouring villages may well have been attacked, the damage done to the city must have fallen well short

of total destruction. The fact that the rebels are reported to have attacked Gaza may indicate that at that time there were no Jews living in the area, something which is also suggested by the earlier decision to exclude Gaza from the Jewish kingdom after the death of Herod.

The city appears not to have been involved in further fighting during the revolt, but no doubt suffered economically from the disturbed state of the country. It is possible that Vespasian passed through Gaza on his way to Alexandria, where he was proclaimed Emperor in 69, and Josephus reports that Titus camped there on his way back to the siege of Jerusalem the following year.³⁴

Once Vespasian had established himself firmly on the imperial throne, and the Jewish Revolt had been crushed, Judaea was re-organised as a full province, governed by a praetorian legate, with one legion under his command.³⁵ Its borders were adjusted,³⁶ and Gaza was not included in the new province, as is made clear by abundant ancient evidence: Ptolemy, who lists it as one of the cities of **Παλαιστίνη ἢ Ἰουδαία Συρτα**³⁷; Eusebius³⁸; the Madaba Map³⁹; and a milestone from the Raphia area,⁴⁰ all of which place the southern border of Syria Palaestina, as the Provincia Iudaea was known from the time of Hadrian onwards, to the west of Raphia, near the villages of Bitolion or Bethaffu; and Marcus Diaconus, who refers to the intervention of the provincial governor at Caesarea in the affairs of Gaza.⁴¹

The next event in the city's history that can be traced is the visit of Hadrian in 130. He was received with great honour and a famous **πανηγυρις Ἀδριανῆ** was founded and continued to be celebrated for several centuries. The Chronicon Paschale, which records this event under the year 119, states that the panegyris was established as a slave market for the sale of Jewish prisoners taken during the Second Revolt, but the dating is obviously confused and, though Jewish prisoners may well have been sold in Gaza, the panegyris cannot have been founded for that purpose.⁴²

In commemoration of Hadrian's visit, the people of Gaza began to date their coins from the year of the Emperor's **ἐπιδημία**, alongside the date by their traditional 'Pompeian' era.⁴³ Throughout his tour of the East, Hadrian conferred favours on a large number of cities, and they recorded their gratitude in many different ways,⁴⁴ but this appears to be the only example in Judaea of the adoption of the date of the epidemia as an era.⁴⁵ It did, however, occur in Athens, after Hadrian's first visit there, probably in 124/5, and is well attested in inscriptions, but was not used on the bronze coinage introduced under Hadrian.⁴⁶ The Hadrianic era was in use on Gaza's coins until the Emperor's death in 138, and was then allowed to lapse.

The fact that Gaza continued minting without interruption throughout the period of the Bar Kokhba War of 132-135 proves conclusively that the city was not seized by the Jewish forces. Its coins, however, like those of Ascalon, were frequently overstruck by the rebels.^{46a} The province as a whole suffered considerable economic damage as a result of the revolt, particularly from the widespread loss of life and the destruction in agricultural areas.⁴⁷ It appears that Hadrian may have raised the tributum capitis in punishment for the revolt.⁴⁸ If this applied to all the inhabitants of the province, pagans as well as Jews, it must have been resented by the citizens of Gaza. But the city's abundant coinage during the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius makes it clear that it

remained prosperous throughout this period.⁴⁹

There is no direct evidence for Gaza's history throughout the rest of the second and the third century, but the province as a whole, known since 135 as Syria Palaestina,⁵⁰ was the scene of many stirring events, which the people of Gaza must have witnessed, if they did not take part in them. In 175 Avidius Cassius, the Legate of Syria, revolted against Marcus Aurelius and proclaimed himself Emperor, with the support of the legions of Syria, Palestine, Arabia and Egypt, and possibly some local troops as well.⁵¹ He must have passed through Gaza on his march south from Syria to Alexandria at the head of his army. Later the same year, after the assassination of Avidius, Marcus Aurelius must also have passed through Gaza, possibly twice, while visiting the scene of the rebellion, in order to re-establish the loyalty of the provinces and their legions.⁵²

A second disturbance came about twenty years later, when another Legate of Syria, Pescennius Niger, also declared himself Emperor.⁵³ (The story that he had earlier served in some capacity in Palestine, the inhabitants of which protested against his excessive taxation, is not to be taken too seriously.⁵⁴) It appears that the cities of Palestine were divided in their loyalties, some supporting Niger and others Septimius Severus.⁵⁵ It is not known, however, which side Gaza took in this conflict. There is no evidence for its being either punished by Severus, as was Neapolis, which for a time was deprived of its city-status,⁵⁶ or rewarded by him, like Sebaste, which was elevated to the status of a colony.⁵⁷ It is likely that Severus and his sons travelled through Gaza when they visited Palestine in 198-99, before going on to Egypt.⁵⁸ Caracalla must have passed through Gaza again on the occasion of his bloodthirsty visit to Alexandria in 215, and his return to the Parthian War.⁵⁹

Another emperor who may have visited Gaza in the course of a war against Parthia is Gordian III in 243. An inscription found in the Portus Augusti at Ostia records a dedication by the people of Gaza to this emperor, naming him as the city's benefactor. The dedication was made: ΕΞ ΕΝΚΕΛΕΘΣΕΩΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΙΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ and through the agency of the ΕΠΙΜΕΛΗΤΗΣ of the temple.⁶⁰ This strongly suggests that Gordian paid some special honour, no doubt a substantial offering, to the temple of Marnas, the chief deity of Gaza, which was destroyed by the Christians about 160 years later.⁶¹

It is with the reign of Gordian that Gaza's coinage comes to an end, apparently a victim, together with the other city coinages of the area, of the rapid inflation of the mid-third century, which made such independent issues no longer viable.⁶²

In the chaotic conditions of the third century, the history of the eastern provinces is hopelessly obscure, and we know nothing of Gaza for the rest of the century. It is difficult even to speculate on the effect on it of the rise to power of Palmyra. Did it suffer economically as a result of the competition of its powerful commercial rival, or did Palmyra's wealth and political strength encourage and stimulate trade throughout the entire region.⁶³ In 272 Palestine sent troops, apparently local levies rather than professional soldiers, to support Aurelian at Emesa in the final battle against Zenobia.⁶⁴ Men from Gaza may have been among them, but we do not know.

Order finally returned to Palestine, and the rest of the Roman world, under Diocletian, when far-reaching administrative and military reforms were

made in the provinces. Gaza was not directly affected by these reforms, though no doubt more settled conditions were good for its trade. The transfer of Legio X Fretensis from Jerusalem to Aila is evidence for the importance of this port at that time, and it is probable that at least some of the merchandise landed there was conveyed to Gaza.⁶⁵ It was probably also under Diocletian that a troop of cavalry, the Equites Promoti Illyriciani, was stationed at Menoia, a little to the south and east of Gaza.⁶⁶

C: CHRISTIANITY COMES TO GAZA.

Towards the end of the third century some historical information on Gaza again becomes available, mainly through the writing of Christian authors. Little is known of the foundation of the Christian community in Gaza. It has been suggested that the city's first bishop was Philemon, to whom St. Paul addressed a letter.⁶⁷ It is, however, apparent from later sources that the community remained small and weak until the fifth century. A number of Christians from Gaza suffered martyrdom during the persecutions under Diocletian. Most prominent among them was Silvanus, ὁ ἐπίσκοπος τῶν ἀμφὶ τὴν Γάζαν ἐκκλησιῶν, who was first sentenced to hard labour in the mines of Phainon, and later beheaded.⁶⁸ Other martyrs mentioned by Eusebius include Timotheus, who was burnt alive, Agapius and Thecla, who were thrown to wild beasts, and several others.⁶⁹ Timotheus was later honoured by the erection of a martyrium, in which were also preserved the remains of the martyrs Major and Thea.⁷⁰

These martyrdoms did not, however, succeed in eradicating Christianity from the area, and in 325 a bishop of Gaza was present at the council of Nicaea.⁷¹ At approximately the same time, the citizens of Maioumas converted to Christianity en masse. The Emperor Constantine was so impressed by their enthusiasm that he granted the town the status of an independent polis and renamed it Constantia, either after his son Constans, as Sozomen states,⁷² or, according to Eusebius,⁷³ after his sister.⁷⁴ The people of Gaza were still, for the most part, staunchly pagan and were apparently extremely indignant at the loss of control over their port. Whether or not they protested at the time is not known, but as soon as they saw the chance of a sympathetic hearing, they seized the opportunity and appealed to the pagan Emperor Julian, who promptly reversed Constantine's decision. Maioumas lost its rights and its new name, and henceforth was to be no longer an independent polis, but merely τὸ παραθαλάσσιον μέρος τῆς Γαζαίων πόλεως sharing the same magistrates and public administration. Only in Church matters was Maioumas allowed to keep its independence, maintaining its own bishop, clergy and festivals. Sozomen writes that in his own time (the first half of the fifth century) it was threatened by the bishop of Gaza, who, on the death of the incumbent of Maioumas, wished to amalgamate the two sees, on the grounds that it was not proper for one city to have two bishops. The people of Maioumas appealed and the national synod elected a new bishop, arguing that the decisions of a pagan emperor should have no standing in Church affairs.⁷⁵ But it appears that eventually the separate bishopric of Maioumas lapsed and apparently was merged with that of the neighbouring town, Anthedon, though the date at which this happened is uncertain.⁷⁶

The bishop of Maioumas is not mentioned by Marcus Diaconus, although the Christian population of the port is described as enthusiastically supporting the efforts of Bishop Porphyry to suppress pagan worship in Gaza.⁷⁷ Yet,

according to Sozomen, there was still a bishop at this time (around the year 400). This omission has been attributed to the rivalry between the two towns, but it seems possible that it may be due to the later editor of the work of Marcus Diaconus, who decided to remove references to a figure whose office no longer existed in his own time.⁷⁸

Petrus Iberus was appointed Bishop of Maioumas soon after the Council of Chalcedon of 451.⁷⁹ Maioumas appears, however, neither in the list of bishoprics of Georgius Cyrius, nor in that of the Hieroclis Syndemus, both, in their final form, probably to be dated to the time of Justinian.⁸⁰ The evidence is unclear, but it seems that the separate bishopric of Maioumas probably disappeared at some time during the sixth century.

The whole episode is interesting for the way it illustrates the tensions that existed between Gaza and Maioumas, tensions which cannot simply be explained as a conflict between a resolutely pagan community and a newly enthusiastic Christian one. Gazaeans, both pagan and Christian, firmly insisted on their right to domination and control over the port, while the people of Maioumas clung with equal obstinacy to their desire for independence.

The most obvious cause for this tension between the towns is economic. Gaza would naturally be anxious to retain control over the port, on the trade of which its prosperity at least partly relied, whereas the merchants of Maioumas may have been equally concerned to make use of their profits for the development of their own town, rather than having them drawn off for the greater glorification of Gaza.

During the first half of the fourth century, Gaza witnessed other events of greater significance for the history of Christianity. At one stage the city became embroiled in the controversy between the Arians and Athanasians. At that time Asclepas was Bishop of Gaza. Marcus Diaconus tells us that he was the founder of the 'Old Church' to the west of the city, and describes him as: τὸν πολλοὺς διωγμοὺς ὑπομείναντα ὑπὲρ τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως. The nature of these persecutions is made clear by the ecclesiastical historians Socrates and Sozomen. In 341 he was accused by the Arians of Athanasianism and, along with other bishops against whom similar charges had been made, was dismissed for his post. A certain Quintianus was appointed in his place. But the demoted bishops appealed to Pope Julius at Rome. He examined them, concluded that they accepted the Nicene Creed, and ordered their reinstatement. Their local communities were still reluctant to accept them, and it finally took the intervention of the Emperor Constantius to enforce the Pope's decision. Then Asclepas was gladly welcomed back to Gaza and, as Marcus makes plain, his memory was subsequently held in honour for his brave struggle to uphold his beliefs.⁸¹

The fourth century was also the period of the career of Hilarion, who introduced monasticism into Palestine, and whose story has been vividly told by Jerome.⁸² He was born in the village of Tabatha, or Thavatha, about five miles south of Gaza,⁸³ the son of wealthy landowners, who sent him as a young boy to Alexandria, to study under a grammaticus.⁸⁴ There Hilarion, who was already a Christian, although his parents were not, came under the influence of Antonius, the originator of the monastic way of life, who lived as a hermit in the Egyptian desert. At the age of fifteen, after his parents' death, he returned to Thavatha, divided his inheritance between his brothers and the poor, and set out for the desert. He settled in a harsh and isolated area, about seven miles south of Maioumas and near the coast,

built himself a rough hut and embarked on a life of extreme privation and danger.⁸⁵ He succumbed, however, neither to starvation, nor exposure, nor the numerous bandits who infested the area.⁸⁶

In the course of time he developed a reputation as a holy man and was visited in his solitude by both Christians and pagans, requesting his assistance in entreating divine intervention to solve their problems. Jerome recounts a number of miraculous cures and expulsions of demons supposed to have been performed by Hilarion.⁸⁷ While these stories cannot be accepted literally, some of them are of interest for the incidental information they may provide. One example is the story of the Frankish candidatus Constantii, from whom Hilarion cast out a demon and who was miraculously enabled to answer in Aramaic when addressed in that language, a detail that suggests that Hilarion had adopted the language of the country people among whom he lived, despite his Greek education.⁸⁸

Another interesting story is that of Italicus, a Christian from Maioumas, who was providing a chariot team to race in the circus games against a team of a duumvir of Gaza and, fearing that his opponent was using black magic to ensure his victory, asked Hilarion to assist him.⁸⁹ The word duumvir is useful supporting evidence that by this time Gaza had achieved the status of a Roman colony.⁹⁰ Italicus' reply when Hilarion asked him why he did not sell his chariot and horses and give the money to the poor,

functionem esse publicam, et hoc se non tam velle, quam cogi,
is also interesting as evidence that at Gaza, as in other cities, the maintenance of a chariot team was an official liturgy imposed on wealthier citizens for the purpose of providing public entertainment.⁹¹ But the account of the large number of conversions that followed the victory of Italicus' chariot amid great public excitement must be exaggerated, as it is clear that the Christian community in Gaza remained small and weak for a long time afterwards.

Hilarion's activities were not confined to Gaza and its immediate vicinity. Sozomen recounts a visit he made to the large and devoutly pagan village of Bethelaea, to the north-east of Gaza,⁹² the original home of Sozomen's family. Following his success in casting out a demon from one Alaphion, whose relationship with Sozomen is not made clear, Sozomen's great-grandfather and the entire family were converted to Christianity.⁹³ Hilarion is also reported to have visited Elusa, at the time of a Saracen (Bedouin) festival, to have converted its participants, and to have laid the foundations for the church there.⁹⁴

In general, however, the accounts of Hilarion's success in making converts must be taken as exaggerated. As we hear from Marcus Diaconus, both Gaza and its surrounding villages remained violently opposed to Christianity forty or so years after his death.⁹⁵ Individuals and families, like that of Sozomen, may well have been convinced by him, attracted by his personality, and perhaps by his success as a faith healer, but there is certainly no evidence of mass conversions taking place. It is possible that he was more successful among the nomad Saracens than among the settled population and that the story about Elusa does reflect a genuine tradition of the conversion of one of the tribes, although his foundation of the church there remains more doubtful.⁹⁶

But Hilarion's main achievement lay not in the success or otherwise of his missionary activity (and in fact Jerome's account does not suggest that

he saw mass conversion as his main purpose. He is depicted as a recluse, whose growing reputation gradually drew him, somewhat reluctantly, into closer contact with the public), but in his introduction of monasticism into Palestine. Among the suplicants, Hilarion had other visitors to his desert cell, those attracted to his ascetic way of life and wishing to share his solitude.⁹⁷ They built their huts nearby, and gradually a community developed and an organised monastic way of life evolved. Other monastic communities sprang up in isolated parts of the country, apparently looking to Hilarion for inspiration, if not under his direct control. Jerome describes him as making a tour of these monasteries and gently reproofing those monks whose behaviour fell short of his ideals.⁹⁸

Inevitably, Hilarion and his monks aroused the hostility of the pagan majority and, in this case too, they seized the opportunity of Julian's accession to the throne to take their revenge. A warrant was acquired for the arrest and execution of Hilarion and his chief disciple, Hesychias, and a mob of Gazaeans, led by the lictiores praefecti, marched on the monastery. Hilarion and Hesychias were, fortunately, absent, on a visit to the tomb of Antonius in Egypt, but the monastery was sacked and destroyed.⁹⁹ Hilarion was warned not to return and fled, first to Sicily and then to Cyprus, where he died.¹⁰⁰ When it was safe to do so, Hesychias brought his body back to Palestine and buried it in the ruins of the monastery, which was restored. From then on, an impressive annual festival was held in Hilarion's honour.¹⁰¹

Julian's reign was also the occasion for an outbreak of mob violence against Christians in Gaza itself. Sozomen describes in detail the savage murder of three young men, and how their bones were subsequently preserved and honoured at Maioumas. The provincial governor suppressed the disorder and imprisoned the ringleaders, intending to prosecute them for murder. For this he incurred Julian's severe displeasure. He was dismissed from his post and put on trial. Julian was considered merciful for not demanding the death penalty. "Why", he is supposed to have said, "should the Gazaeans be put on trial for getting their own back on a few Christians for all the insults they and their gods have suffered from them?".¹⁰²

Gaza experienced a natural disaster at this time, in the severe earthquake that struck large areas of Palestine on May 19, 363. Damage was recorded at Gaza, as in a number of other cities, but the extent and severity of damage is not known, and there has not been sufficient excavation carried out in Gaza to provide archaeological evidence.¹⁰³

D: THE TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH

The final conversion of Gaza to Christianity came only at the end of the fourth century, with the appointment as Bishop of Gaza of Porphyry, who apparently combined personal saintliness and extreme mildness in his approach to individuals with a fanatical determination to eradicate pagan worship from his city. A graphic account of his struggles and his final success in destroying the pagan cults of the city has been provided by his faithful companion and deacon, Marcus Diaconus, an account which in essentials carries conviction as to its authenticity, although a few mildly miraculous episodes may be treated with a certain degree of scepticism - and can be shown to have literary parallels - and a number of details have obviously been altered and falsified by a later editor, presumably on doctrinal grounds.¹⁰⁴

When Porphyry arrived in Gaza in March 394, accompanied by Marcus, he found a small community of 280 Christians.¹⁰⁵ He laboured for some years to increase the size of his congregation with little success, continually harrassed and occasionally threatened by the hostility of the pagan majority.¹⁰⁶ Then in 398 he sent Marcus to Constantinople, with a petition to the Emperor Arcadius. The response was favourable; an imperial decree ordering the closure of the temples was issued and Hilarius, a subadiuva magistri officorum, was despatched to see that the decree was obeyed. He arrived in Gaza, accompanied by officials from Caesarea and a body of troops, and ordered the destruction of all images and the closure of the temples, except the Marneion, which he allowed to remain open, supposedly in return for a large bribe.¹⁰⁷

The pagans soon returned privately to their traditional practices, but from then on it must have been apparent that it was only a matter of time before the Marneion and the other temples were destroyed. Jerome, at least, anticipated this when, in 400/401, he wrote to Laeta:

Iam et Aegyptius Serapis factus est Christianus. Marnas Gazae
luget inclusus et eversionem templi iugiter pertremescit.¹⁰⁸

The pagans continued their harrassment of the Christians and their bishop, and in September 400 Porphyry consulted the Archbishop of Caesarea. They travelled together to Constantinople to appeal to the Emperor and gained the support of the Empress Eudoxia, who conveyed their request to her husband.¹⁰⁹ Arcadius, however, turned down their appeal, on the grounds that, though Gaza might be pagan, it paid its taxes loyally and brought much income to the treasury.¹¹⁰ Eudoxia continued to support the bishops and eventually, through her manoeuvres, a petition was presented to her infant son, the future Emperor Theodosius II, which Arcadius felt obliged to accept. An imperial edict was issued, ordering the destruction of the temples, and a high official, Cynegius, was appointed to see that it was carried out. The Empress personally presented the bishops with a large sum of money for the building of a church in Gaza, and of a pilgrim hostel, where visiting monks could be entertained for three days free of charge.¹¹¹

Porphyry arrived at Maioumas, to an enthusiastic reception, on May 1 402, and Cynegius arrived two weeks later, accompanied by the consularis and dux from Caesarea and a large body of troops. Many of the pagans, including most of the richest citizens of Gaza, fled to the villages, or to other cities, and Cynegius promptly requisitioned their houses to quarter his troops. The edict was proclaimed, and the Christians enthusiastically joined the soldiers in tearing down and firing the temples. The priests of Marnas barricaded themselves in their temple and put up a stubborn resistance, but eventually the Marneion also was ransacked and destroyed. The private houses were searched and images and sacred books were seized and burnt.¹¹²

Later in the summer Porphyry embarked on the building of a new church on the site of the Marneion. There was some controversy among the Christians as to whether the circular plan of the temple should be retained, or whether its memory should be completely obliterated. The argument was settled by the arrival of a letter from the Empress, containing the plan of a cruciform

church, which she requested that they should follow. Porphyry engaged the services of Rufinus, an architect from Antioch, and the work was begun.¹¹³ Eudoxia maintained her interest in the project. The following year she despatched thirty-two columns of brilliant green Carystus marble for the new church.¹¹⁴ After five years the church was completed. It was named the Eudoxiana, and its dedication took place at Easter 407. A festival was held, lasting a week, and many monks from the surrounding countryside, as well as other visitors, took part. In fact, the festival, no doubt the first occasion on which a large gathering of Christians was held in Gaza, sounds very much like those held for the dedication of new churches and described by Choricus about 130 years later.¹¹⁵

Even after this success, Porphyry's troubles were not over, and on at least one occasion disputes between Christians and pagans led to a riot requiring the intervention of troops from Caesarea.¹¹⁶ We are told nothing of Porphyry's later years. Marcus ends his account with the bishop's death, which he carefully dates by the calendar of Gaza to February 26 420.¹¹⁷

The Life of Porphyry of Marcus Diaconus, as well as being a vivid account of the struggle between Hellenic paganism and Christianity, also gives us a number of details about the city of Gaza itself, its buildings, religious cults, its magistrates and officials,¹¹⁸ and the relative status of pagans and Christians in the city.

Marcus describes Gaza in the following words: ΓΑΖΑ ΠΟΛΙΣ ΕΣΤΙΝ τῆς Παλαιστίνης ἐν μεθορίῳ τῆς Αἰγύπτου ὑπάρχουσα, οὐκ ἄσημος δὲ τυγχάνουσα, ἀλλὰ καὶ πολυάνδρος καὶ τῶν ἐμφανῶν πόλεων οὕσα. 119.

In several places he refers to the villages surrounding Gaza, but none is named, except Maioumas.¹²⁰ The city gate is mentioned,¹²¹ and the houses are described as being made, for the most part, of sun-baked brick.¹²² Apparently, they adjoined one another, or had only narrow passages in between, as Porphyry and Marcus were able to escape from a riot by fleeing across the roof-tops, which were presumably flat. Eventually, they were given shelter in a hut built on top of a roof. This hut appears to have been of light construction - Marcus remarks that they were able to stay in it only because it was summer - and was presumably intended for storage rather than habitation. The girl who sheltered them there had to bring up bedding and to enter the house below by means of some apparatus with a pulley.¹²³

None of the public buildings of Gaza is mentioned, apart from the temples and churches, but Marcus does describe a τετραμφοδον, or crossroads, where four colonnaded streets met, in which stood a nude relief of Aphrodite, worshipped mainly by the women of Gaza.¹²⁴ Eight public temples are listed, those of Helios, Aphrodite, Apollo, Kore, Hecate, the Tyche of Gaza, Marnas, and one the identity of which is made uncertain by textual difficulties, possibly a Heroeon, a Heraeon, or an Ioon.¹²⁵

The only temple of which any description is given is the Marneion. It was situated in the centre of the city,¹²⁶ and was circular in form, crowned by a high dome and surrounded by a double peristyle.¹²⁷ A series of coins from Gaza depicts the facade of the Marneion (identified by the inscription ΜΑΡΝΑΕ) as two columns supporting an architrave, with a pediment above. If this is not merely conventional, the Marneion must have had a

porch, like that of the Pantheon at Rome.¹²⁸ The inner sanctuary was closed by strong doors of bronze,¹²⁹ and had at least one other, less conspicuous exit.¹³⁰ The temple was lavishly equipped with images¹³¹ and sacred vessels, of gold and silver, as well as of non-precious metals.¹³² The sanctuary was lined with marble slabs, which, after the destruction of the temple, were used to pave the square in front of the new church. But the people of Gaza, particularly the women, refused to walk on them, clinging to their belief in the sanctity of these stones.¹³³

The other buildings of Gaza mentioned by Marcus are those owned by the Christian community. Most important of these was the Irene church, within the city, but apparently at some distance from the Marneion, since the Christians marched in procession from the Irene to the site of the razed temple, to begin working on the new church.¹³⁴ The local people claimed that the place where the church stood was known as Irene, because it was there that the fighting stopped, when the city surrendered to Alexander the Great. Marcus, however, preferred to believe that the church was known after its founder, Bishop Irenion.¹³⁵ While the legend regarding the origin of the name sounds unlikely, there is no reason to doubt the tradition that the place was known as Irene. The adoption of the existing name would help to make the church more acceptable to the pagan population, as well as fitting the practice of the early Church, which often named churches after abstract qualities, such as Irene or Sophia. Beside the church there was a small house, designated for the use of the bishop.¹³⁶

To the west of the city, at some distance outside its walls, stood the 'Old Church', founded by Bishop Asclepas. Another holy place outside the walls was the martyrium of Timotheus, which also held the bones of the martyrs Major and Thea.¹³⁷ The Old Church appears to be the small church at a distance of five stades from the city, described by Choricus as having been restored in the sixth century.¹³⁸

Some hints are given by Marcus as to the relative social and economic status of pagans and Christians in Gaza. It appears that the majority of the richer, more Hellenized citizens were pagans, while Christianity drew its support mainly from the poorer sections of the population. Before the arrival of the imperial commission sent to destroy the temples, many of the pagans fled from the city. Marcus states plainly:

ἦσαν δὲ οἱ πλεῖστους τῶν πλουσιῶν τῆς πόλεως 139.

The impression that the pagans were more Hellenized is reinforced by the few personal names of Gazaeans recorded by Marcus. Two of the πρωτεύοντες the chief magistrates of Gaza, are called Timotheus and Epiphanius,¹⁴⁰ and a woman specifically described as τῶν ἐμφανῶν τῆς πόλεως bears the Graeco-Roman name of Aelias. If the story of her acceptance of Christianity, while on the point of death during a difficult labour, her subsequent safe delivery and the conversion of her entire family, can be taken seriously, they must have proved a valuable addition to the Christian community.¹⁴¹

At some time after the completion of the Eudoxiana, a riot broke out, provoked by some dispute between the church οἰκονόμος and one of the πρωτεύοντες, who is given the name of Sampsychos. The etymology of this name is uncertain, but it is not necessarily Semitic. At any rate, it appears that Sampsychos was a pagan, and since the rest of the city council rushed to help him against the Christians, presumably they were too.¹⁴² Not all the leading citizens had fled at the time of the destruction of the

temples, nor had they all converted. Despite the growing influence of the Christians, they still played their traditional role in the administration of the city.

On the other hand, the Christians seems to have been less Hellenized. During a discussion on what should be done with the Marneion, a child, apparently seized by divine inspiration, called out that the temple should be burnt. This outburst is said to have been in Aramaic.¹⁴³ Later, while being questioned by the Bishop, he repeated his instructions in Greek, though his mother stated that neither she, nor her son, knew that language.¹⁴⁴ Whatever the truth of this anecdote, the implication is that Aramaic was the normal language of the Christian community.

This is also suggested by two of the names recorded of Christians (the third, that of a deacon, is, admittedly, Cornelius¹⁴⁵). One is that of the young girl who sheltered Porphyry and Marcus, when they fled across the roof-tops. She was not yet a Christian, but anxious to be baptised. She was clearly poor; she worked to support herself and her grandmother. Her name was Salaptha, which Marcus explains as Irene in Greek. Salaptha was, then, a corrupt form of an Aramaic name, probably similar to the Hebrew שלומית.¹⁴⁶ The other Aramaic name recorded for a member of the Christian community is that of the Deaconess Manaris, which Marcus translates as Φωτελινη so it was probably related to מנורה or מנורית.¹⁴⁷

Nevertheless, it is clear that not only the very poor were attracted to Christianity. The Church owned property, apart from the churches and the bishop's house. It was in possession of land in one of the villages outside Gaza and was entitled to collect revenues from it, even though collection could sometimes be difficult, as a result of pagan hostility.¹⁴⁸ The dispute between Samsychus and the church οὐλοσόμενος was on account of some lands.¹⁴⁹

Moreover, one of the examples that Marcus gives of the harrassment of the Christians by the pagans is that they 'did not allow them to hold public office, but treated them as bad citizens'.¹⁵⁰ This indicates that public office was still an honour to be sought after, as one that brought power and influence, despite the fact that it involved a heavy financial burden, and that at least some of the Christian community were eligible for it. If they had all been disqualified by poverty or low social standing, they could not have complained of discrimination on religious grounds.

It does, then, appear that, though the leading citizens of Gaza remained faithful to their Hellenic paganism and the new faith found converts most readily among the poor and Aramaic-speaking, at least some persons of wealth and social standing were members of the Christian community. The strength and influence of the Church increased in the years following the destruction of the temples, but it must have taken many years after the death of Bishop Porphyry before the new religion was accepted by a majority of the people and Gaza could be considered a truly Christian city.

At approximately the time of the events narrated by Marcus, the province of Palaestina and its neighbours underwent the last major administrative reorganisation of the Byzantine period. In about 295 Diocletian had greatly increased the size of Palestine, at the expense of Arabia, by adding it to Petra, Aila and the Negev. This expanded province proved administratively cumbersome, and in 358 it was divided into two, Palaestina and Palaestina Salutaris, which comprised the territory of the

Negev and Petra, which had earlier belonged to Arabia. Then, in approximately 400, Palaestina was divided again, into Palaestina Prima, which comprised Judaea, Idumaea, Samaria and Peraea, and Palaestina Secunda, including the Galilee, part of the Decapolis and the Gaulan. Palaestina Prima retained the old provincial capital of Caesarea.¹⁵¹ Gaza was, of course, included in Palaestina Prima, the borders of which reached to the south of Raphia.¹⁵² Marcus Diaconus refers to the intervention of the consularis (civil governor) from Caesarea in the affairs of Gaza, but it is impossible to tell whether the province had been divided by the time of the events he describes, or not.¹⁵³ The division is recorded in the Notitia Dignitatum, the part of which referring to the Eastern Empire probably to be dated to around 408,¹⁵⁴ and in a decree of Theodosius II of 409.¹⁵⁵

The fifth century is another obscure period in the history of Gaza. A little is known of some of the literary figures of the city at this time (to be discussed in the next section), and it was also the period of the activity of the controversial Monophysite theologian Petrus Iberus, who was appointed Bishop of Maioumas shortly after the Council of Chalcedon in 451.¹⁵⁶ He was later exiled to Alexandria, where he was active in theological disputes. At a later date he returned to Maioumas, still embroiled in controversy, made a number of journeys, notably to Arabia and Phoenicia, and eventually died at Jamnia. His body was brought back to Maioumas and buried with elaborate ceremonial before the altar of his church there.¹⁵⁷

E: THE RHETORICAL SCHOOL OF GAZA AND THE WRITINGS OF CHORICIUS

Towards the end of the fifth century Gaza suddenly flowered as a centre for literary and rhetorical studies, producing many well-known orators and poets, and attracting students from all over the Greek-speaking world.¹⁵⁸ The school of Gaza had close connections with that of Alexandria. Many of its leading figures had studied there, and Alexandrian themes and styles influenced the literary works produced in Gaza. It was a purely literary school; law, medicine, or technical subjects were not taught there, nor, apparently, was philosophy, although at least one of Gaza's rhetors had studied Neoplatonism in Alexandria. It was also a devoutly Christian school, some of its leading exponents producing theological as well as rhetorical works, and this may well have been a factor in its reputation and popularity. The reason why τῶν Ἀθηναίων οἱ παῖδες οὐ παρὰ τῶν πατέρων, παρὰ δὲ τῶν Σύρων ἀττικίζειν ἀξιοῦσι μανθάνειν, as Aeneas of Gaza wrote to his friend, Theodorus the sophist, may have had as much to do with the purity of the school's religious beliefs as with that of its Greek.¹⁵⁹

The development of the rhetorical school of Gaza is not easy to trace. An inscription, found at Eleusis and dated to the third century, honours the orator Ptolemaeus of Gaza, the son of Serenus the Phoenicarch, but there is no indication that he either studied or practised in his native city.¹⁶⁰ The inscription specifically refers to him as

Γαζαῖτον καὶ ἄλλων πόλεων πολίτην
which may suggest that he travelled widely in the course of his career.^{160a}

The Totius Orbis Descriptio, which may be dated to the fourth century, mentions the pre-eminence of Gaza in ἀκροάματα.¹⁶¹ This may suggest that rhetoric was already being taught and practised to a high standard in

the city at that time. On the other hand, the fact that Hilarion's parents sent him to Alexandria for his secondary education may suggest the opposite.¹⁶²

At any rate, the first well-known orator from Gaza of whom we hear is Zosimus. There is some uncertainty in the sources as to his date, the reign of Zeno or Anastasius, and also whether he, in fact, came from Gaza, or from Ascalon. Possibly two separate individuals have been confused. He is said to have written commentaries on Demosthenes and Lysias, a biography of Demosthenes, and an alphabetically arranged **ΛΕΞΙΣ ῥΗΤΟΡΙΚΗ** but none of his works has been preserved.¹⁶³

Another important writer of the reign of Anastasius was Aeneas of Gaza. In his youth he studied under the Neoplatonist Hierocles in Alexandria, and he retained an interest in philosophy, which he attempted to combine with his Christian beliefs. He wrote a Platonic dialogue, the Theophrastus, an unparalleled use of that literary form at the time. In the dialogue, which is still extant, he attempted to prove the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body.¹⁶⁴ A collection of twenty-five of his letters has also been preserved.¹⁶⁵

Another important figure in the literary life of Gaza during the reign of Anastasius was Timotheus. He did his city an important service by addressing to the Emperor a **τραγωδία** (apparently simply a long poem, rather than a dramatic tragedy), which was both a panegyric and an appeal for the abolition of the **δημόσιον χρυσάργυριον**, an oppressive tax on profits, a request which Anastasius granted.¹⁶⁶ He was also the author of a treatise **περὶ ζώων**, in four books of hexametric verse, apparently concentrating on the exotic animals and birds of India, Arabia and Africa, of which some fragments have been preserved in a later prose summary,¹⁶⁷ and of a book on grammar, **κανόνες καθολικοὶ περὶ συντάξεως**.

Johannes of Gaza was another, rather later poet and grammarian, who worked mainly in the reign of Justinian. A few of his works have survived, firstly a collection of six Anacreontic poems, written to celebrate public occasions in Gaza: for a wedding, in honour of the dux Zacharias, or for the spring festival known as the 'Day of Roses'.¹⁶⁸ The poems deal mainly with mythological subjects and are heavily influenced by the Alexandrian school and the style of Nonnus. Yet another work of Johannes which has been preserved is the long **Ἐκφρασις τοῦ κοσμικοῦ πίνακος**, a hexametric poem describing a wall-painting in the winter baths of Gaza, opened in about 536. The painting depicted various natural phenomena in mythological imagery, and the poem is an important source of Byzantine art of this kind.¹⁶⁹ Johannes also ran a school of Gaza, presumably of grammar and rhetoric. One of his Anacreontic poems is entitled

**λόγος δὲ
ἔπεδεξατο ἐν τῇ ἡμέρα τῶν ῥόδων ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ διατριβῇ** 170.

But the central figure in the rhetorical school of Gaza was Procopius, who was active from the reign of Anastasius to that of Justinian.¹⁷¹ We know something of his life, both from his letters,^{171a} of which over 160 have been preserved, and from the funeral oration in his honour delivered by his pupil Choricus. His literary talent was apparent while he was still a boy, and he was sent to study rhetoric in Alexandria, where he won a prize in a contest against a more experienced rhetor.¹⁷² His reputation spread,

and he was invited to join the rhetorical schools of Antioch, Tyre, Caesarea and Berytus, but, after spending some time in Caesarea, he preferred to return home to Gaza.¹⁷³ The fact that Choricus remarks on this choice may suggest that at the time all these rhetorical schools were considered superior to that of Gaza, and it may have been, in part, due to Procopius himself that Gaza's school acquired its high reputation.

In Gaza Procopius was appointed to an official chair of rhetoric and he was paid a salary from public funds.¹⁷⁴ His duties included giving speeches on public occasions, such as a panegyric to the Emperor Anastasius, on the occasion of the erection of a statue to him in Gaza,¹⁷⁵ as well as directing the teaching of rhetoric in the city.

Apart from his rhetorical work, Procopius was an eminent theologian, and a number of his biblical commentaries and other theological works are extant.¹⁷⁶ We also have a small number of his rhetorical speeches, **ἔκφρασεις** and **διαλέξεις**, which were originally ascribed to Choricus,¹⁷⁷ as well as the collection of letters. Procopius died in 526, or soon afterwards, and Choricus delivered his funeral oration.¹⁷⁸ It is possible that the younger Procopius, for whom Choricus composed an epithalamium, was his grandson.¹⁷⁹

Choricus was the most famous of Procopius' pupils, and seems to have succeeded him as head of the rhetorical school of Gaza, and as the city's leading orator. There is no direct evidence for this - we know nothing of Choricus' life - but his extant writings¹⁸⁰ include a number of speeches delivered on important public occasions, including the dedication of two new churches,¹⁸¹ funerals of leading citizens,¹⁸² weddings,¹⁸³ and honorific addresses to important personalities, such as the consularis and dux of the province¹⁸⁴ and the magister militum.¹⁸⁵ He also occasionally refers to himself as a teacher, or to his pupils.¹⁸⁶

Choricus was unlike his master Procopius in having, apparently, no interest in theology, and his writings, many of which have been preserved, are entirely literary and rhetorical in character. The majority are on purely literary themes, drawn from classical mythology and literature, and need not be discussed here, but from others it is possible, with a certain degree of difficulty, caused by Choricus' highly involved and elaborate style and his avoidance of proper names of people and places, in accordance with the rhetorical practice of the period, to obtain a considerable amount of information about Gaza in his time, the city itself, some of its public figures, its buildings, its festivals and ways of life.

The picture Choricus paints of Gaza is of a pleasant and prosperous city, with a high standard of living. He describes it as being well-situated in flat and fruitful countryside, close enough to the sea for ease in the provision of supplies, while sufficiently far from it to be protected from winter storms, and enjoying a pleasant climate throughout the year. It had fine buildings, and its inhabitants were of an agreeable disposition.¹⁸⁷ The amiability of the citizens and their hospitality to visitors is mentioned again in another passage:

πολλοὺς

οἶδα ξένους ἐγὼ παραδραμεῖν βουλευσαμένους τὴν πόλιν καὶ
συχνὸν διατρέψαντας ἡμεροδότητι τῶν ἐνοικοῦντων 188. ,

and is confirmed by one of those visitors, Antoninus Placentinus, who described the people of Gaza as:

homines honestissimi, omni liberalitate decori, amatores peregrinorum.¹⁸⁹

Many of these visitors were attracted to Gaza by the luxurious public festivals held in the city. Choricus describes in detail festivals organised to celebrate the dedication of two new churches, to which visitors poured in from the countryside, from 'the neighbouring city' (Maioumas, or even Ascalon?), and from greater distances. Lavish public banquets, with an abundance of delicacies and of wine, were laid out in the city squares, while the leading citizens entertained distinguished visitors in private. The streets were lined with booths, hung with rich tapestries and decorated with laurel boughs, where a wide variety of wares were on sale. Prices were kept low and profits shared among the stall-holders, to prevent the unseemly pushing and shouting of the market-place. At night the streets were lit by torches, and elaborate 'firework displays' were held, in which letters of fire spelled out blessings on the benefactors of the city, a skill in which Choricus says the craftsmen of Gaza surpassed those of Alexandria.¹⁹⁰

No doubt these celebrations in honour of the new churches were particularly splendid, but festivals were held regularly at Gaza, at frequent intervals throughout the year. Choricus says: πάντες ἔτος ἡμῶν πληθεὺς ὡς εἰπεῖν πανηγύρεων ^{191.}

Most of these festivals were probably religious in character, associated with various churches, saints and martyrs, but some appear to be survivals from the pagan tradition, though presumably cleansed of those elements offensive to the Church. Choricus composed at least one brief διὰλεξις for the 'Day of Roses' already mentioned in connection with Johannes of Gaza.¹⁹² This festival presumably corresponds with the Rosalia celebrated by the Roman soldiers of Syria in the third century, and was a springtime nature festival, associated with Aphrodite and Adonis. Stark also connects it with the widespread water festival Maioumas, for which there is no evidence at Gaza (There does not appear to be any connection between this festival and the name of Gaza's port).¹⁹³

Yet another festival at which Choricus delivered an oration was the Brumalia of the Emperor Justinian. The Brumalia was originally a feast in honour of Bacchus, held during December, and widely celebrated by the later emperors. Choricus claims that it was Justinian's custom to attend the theatre at that time.¹⁹⁴

Other entertainments were also provided in Gaza. There were mimes, performed in the theatres and extremely popular, although a local by-law apparently forbade teachers to attend them, on grounds of their immorality. Choricus devotes a long speech to arguing against the necessity of this law, pointing out that mature, educated people were hardly likely to be corrupted by this spectacle.¹⁹⁵

On the other hand, he is far more critical of other popular entertainments, particularly of chariot-racing, which he claims excited its spectators to the point of madness and threw great cities into disorder.¹⁹⁶ Nor did he care for hunting, dancing, musical and choral performances, wrestling and athletics, and accepted the ban on attendance at these spectacles far more willingly than that on mime.¹⁹⁷ Despite this official disapproval, no doubt originating from the Church, these pastimes remained popular. Furthermore, we have a hint that athletics may even still have

played a part in the education of the sons of the upper classes of Gaza in the metrical epitaph of a young boy, mentioning his victories in the 'prize-bearing stadium', and dated 569.¹⁹⁸

While these festivals and other entertainments are an indication of the wealth of Gaza in the sixth century, there is further evidence, which may even suggest a sudden rise in prosperity - the large-scale construction programme reported by Choricus. Most of the building projects he describes were carried out at the instigation of Marcianus, the Bishop of Gaza, sometimes with the cooperation of Stephanus, the consularis of the province. Others appear to have been initiated primarily by Stephanus himself.

Bishop Marcianus was born to a respected family in Gaza, one of eight children.¹⁹⁹ He was educated in poetry and rhetoric, studying under Procopius, and was then trained in theology by his uncle.²⁰⁰ Eventually, he became Bishop of Gaza and as such played a leading part in the affairs of the city, being apparently more influential and active than the elected magistrates.²⁰¹ When the citizens were alarmed, during the Samaritan revolt, by the news that imperial troops were to pass through the city, having already caused serious disorder in a neighbouring town, it was Marcianus who organised the provision of supplies to the soldiers, thus ensuring that the peace was kept.²⁰² On another occasion he was dispatched on an urgent mission to the Emperor, but we are not told whether this was on civic or ecclesiastical business.²⁰³

But Marcianus' chief interest was in building and improving the public facilities of Gaza. His greatest achievement was the construction of two magnificent new churches, that of St. Sergius, completed before 536, and the Church of St. Stephen the Martyr, completed between 536 and 548.²⁰⁴ The two speeches Choricus delivered at the festivals celebrating the dedication of these churches include detailed descriptions of the buildings, their paintings and mosaics.²⁰⁵

Marcianus also saw to the repair of the Church of the Apostles, which was in a dangerous state and close to collapse, a situation which was giving rise to much public criticism of the city magistrates, who had neglected to deal with the matter.²⁰⁶ He also restored a small church in the countryside, about fifty stades from the city, presumably the Old Church mentioned by Marcus Diaconus.²⁰⁷

But Marcianus was not concerned only with church buildings. He added to the stoas lining the main streets and opened a new bath-house, since the old one could not be reached safely from all parts of the city, though he does not explain why this was so.²⁰⁸ Yet another of his projects, apparently the first after he took office, was the restoration of the city wall, which had fallen into disrepair, in some places completely broken down and in others still standing, but easy to scale. According to Choricus, this situation caused much insecurity in the city, and there were constant rumours of an impending attack on it. Marcianus gained the active support and cooperation of the governor, Stephanus, and of the leading citizens of the town, and the wall was rebuilt and an additional trench dug outside it.²⁰⁹

Stephanus, who was the consularis, or civil governor, of Palaestina Prima, residing at Caesarea, seems to have been an active and efficient official,²¹⁰ and to have shown considerable favour to Gaza, of which he was a native.²¹¹ He contributed generously to the building of the Church of

St. Sergius,²¹² and was involved in other building projects in Gaza: ὁ βασιλέως ἐπώνυμος χώρος (possibly a basilica), still uncompleted at the time of Choricus' speech, the 'summer' theatre, and a new bath-house, which would also provide an abundant supply of drinking water.²¹³ At the instigation of Marcianus, he also arranged for the reconstruction of the city wall.²¹⁴

This reconstruction, of which we have evidence in an inscription put up by the building contractors who carried out the work,²¹⁵ was part of a general trend at the time. Many cities had let their defences fall into disrepair and were now, in an age of increasing insecurity, forced to rebuild them.²¹⁶ Stephanus may have been anxious to display his concern for the security of his native city, and to demonstrate the enthusiasm with which he carried out his duties as provincial governor.²¹⁷

But it is not clear that Gaza lay under any specific threat of the attack, at that time. Choricus, in his eulogies on the initiators of the project, speaks eloquently of the feelings of fear and insecurity that prevailed in Gaza before the rebuilding of the wall:

τὴν γὰρ

ἐνεγκοῦσαν [πόλιν] ὀρῶν περιβόλων ἀσθενεῖα προσκειμένην
 ἀεὶ τῆ προαιρέσει τῶν πολεμίων εἰς ἄλωσιν, ἴσον νομισσας
 τῷ δεδουλωσθαι τὸ τὴν ἀεὶ παροῦσαν ἡμέραν δουλείας
 ἐλπίδα παρέχειν²¹⁸.

He is, however, forced to admit that the city lay in no immediate danger:

ἐντεῦθεν ἡ Φήμη κατεγέλα τῆς πόλεως καὶ πολέμους
 ἐκήρυττε πολεμίων ἡσυχάζοντων²¹⁹.

and there is no evidence that the city was genuinely under threat of conquest and slavery. The most serious disturbance in the province at that time, the Samaritan Revolt, had taken place far to the north of Gaza, in the Samaritan heartland, and the city's main anxiety at the time of the revolt had been the possibility of a visit by imperial troops.²²⁰ Gangs of bandits made the roads unsafe for travellers, and it was occasionally necessary to take action against them, as Stephanus did, even on the roads in the Caesarea area.²²¹ But bandits who ambush travellers on isolated stretches of the roads are scarcely likely to attack a large city, and to need to be kept out by fortifications. A perhaps more serious problem was that of raids by Saracens, nomad tribes, the Bedouin of the Negev, or from Transjordan. Choricus mentions several raids by these nomads and the expeditions led against them by the various generals.²²² But it does not seem that the Saracens were capable of mounting a full-scale assault on a city, especially one the size of Gaza. It has been pointed out that many of the towns of the Negev, and even small, isolated settlements could not have withstood a serious attack.²²³ Moreover, Justinian dismantled the old system of border defence, by fortifications and settlements of *limitanei*, replacing it by the phylarchate, the system of paying Arab chieftains to control the activities of the nomad tribes. Once again, this suggests that little more than police action was necessary in the Negev.²²⁴

It appears, then, that the restoration of the defences of Gaza by Marcianus and Stephanus was prompted not by any immediate threat, but rather by their desire to do everything possible for the further glorification of the city (and perhaps also of their own reputations). Choricus' remarks about the continual fear of conquest which the people endured must be

regarded as heightened rhetoric, intended to increase his audience's awareness of the service performed by their benefactors in repairing the wall, and to deepen its sense of gratitude towards them. Whether the people of Gaza had needed to be convinced of the necessity of this project, which must have required a considerable outlay in resources and effort, and to what extent Choriccius was able to persuade them that it had indeed been essential, it is impossible to say.

F: THE ARAB CONQUEST.

After the time of Choriccius, Gaza again slips into the shadows, and almost nothing is known of its history in the last years of Byzantine rule. In 618/9 it was overrun and occupied by the Persians under Chosroes II, as they pushed south towards Egypt, apparently without putting up any resistance. We have no evidence for Gaza under Persian rule, but the ten years of occupation seem to have passed peacefully.²²⁵ In 622 the Emperor Heraclius launched his counter-attack against the Persians, to regain his eastern provinces. Chosroes surrendered after a decisive defeat at Nineveh in 627. By 629 Heraclius had regained control of Palestine, and Gaza, with the rest of the province, was returned to Byzantine rule.²²⁶

But the long struggle with Persia had drained the resources of the Empire and exhausted its capacity to wage war. Moreover, the Persian conquest of the eastern provinces, especially the loss of Jerusalem, had inflicted a severe psychological shock on the Byzantines, and had increased the confidence of the Saracen tribes of southern Palestine and Transjordan, who now stepped up their raids into the province and made the roads increasingly unsafe, though they apparently still hesitated to attack the cities themselves.²²⁷ Like his predecessors, Heraclius tried to deal with this problem by paying Bedouin chieftains to keep the roads open. It is also possible that the cities, too, paid tribute to the Bedouin to ensure their safety.²²⁸

Yet another, and ultimately more dangerous, threat came from the Arabs of the Arabian peninsula, now united under the Prophet Mohammed, and beginning to press north and west against the borders of the Empire. These Arabs were well acquainted with Gaza; it was the final station on the caravan route from Mecca, and was frequently visited by Arab traders. Arab tradition even suggests that a merchant colony may have settled in the city some time before the conquest. One report speaks of a group of traders from the distinguished Meccan tribe of the Kuraish, who quarrelled with Mohammed. Despite a truce, they feared for their future safety, and left Arabia for Gaza, arriving there at the time when Heraclius regained control of the province.²²⁹

The first stage of the Arab attack on Palestine occurred in 630, when Mohammed came to an agreement with the town of Aila on the Gulf of Aqaba, by which his troops should have free access to the town, its water, and the passes surrounding it. But Mohammed's death later the same year was followed by wars of succession, and it was only in 633 that his successor, the Caliph Abu-Bakr, gathered an army at Medina, and dispatched it in three divisions, under three commanders, to raid Palestine.²³⁰

It is extremely difficult to reconstruct the events leading to the Arab conquest of Palestine. The Byzantine sources are brief and do not give sufficient detail. The Arab accounts were written long after the events

they describe, are frequently exaggerated and inaccurate, and there are wide discrepancies between them.²³¹ Modern scholars also differ in their interpretation of these sources. It is, however, clear that Gaza was the main objective of one of the Arab armies, that led by Amr-ibn-el-As, and that some of the first battles between the Arabs and the Byzantines took place close to the city.

Two of the Byzantine sources, Theophanes and Nicephorus, report that Heraclius had suspended payments to the local Bedouin, who in revenge turned to the invading Moslems and guided them to Gaza.²³² It is usually assumed that the Arab army took the normal direct route from Aila to Gaza,²³³ but Mayerson points out that this route was perfectly familiar to many of the Arabs, and they would have had no need of local guides while following the caravan route. He suggests, therefore, that the Arabs first turned south into Sinai from Aila, and were then guided through the desert by the Bedouin, thus approaching Gaza from an unexpected direction.²³⁴

The first battle for Palestine seems to have taken place at an unidentified place known as Dathin, or Tadun, apparently a few miles south or south-east of Gaza, in February 634. The patricius Sergius had come out from Caesarea and faced the Arabs with a large force. The Byzantines were totally defeated, about four thousand were killed, and Sergius was captured by the Saracens, who were assisting the Moslems, and was tortured to death, on the grounds that it was he who had persuaded Heraclius to suspend their payments.²³⁵

It is sometimes argued that Gaza was taken by the Arabs after this battle,²³⁶ but most scholars reject this view, arguing that they still did not have the confidence to attack the walled cities, despite their control of the countryside.²³⁷ Guillou states emphatically: 'Gaza n'a pas pris en 634'.²³⁸

The Arabs were now forced to regroup, in order to face serious resistance by the Byzantines, who had gathered a large army under the command of Theodorus, the brother of Heraclius. This army was defeated at the Battle of Adjnadayn in July 634. From then on the Moslems were in complete control of the countryside, and could raid and pillage at will.²³⁹ But Byzantine resistance was not completely crushed until the Battle of the Yarmuk in 636, in which a second Byzantine army was totally destroyed. Then, at last, the cities finally yielded to the Arabs.²⁴⁰

Gaza was finally taken in June or July of 637, by the victorious army of Amr-ibn-el-As, as he marched south from Damascus.²⁴¹ Some details of the conquest of Gaza are provided by the Passio Sanctorum Sexaginta Martyrum, a poor Latin translation of a Greek work, of uncertain date, but certainly earlier than the eleventh century.²⁴² The city was besieged by the Arabs and forced to surrender. The citizens were not harmed, but the small garrison was disarmed and imprisoned. This garrison consisted of sixty soldiers, organised in two βάνδα, the Scythii and the Voluntarii, under the command of an optio, Kallinikos.²⁴³ This is the only report we have of troops being stationed within Gaza itself throughout the entire Roman and Byzantine period, and it is not known how long they had been there, probably not very long. They were clearly organised as an official military unit, but the Passio reports that on their imprisonment they were separated from their wives and children, which suggests that they were part of a local militia.²⁴⁴ On refusing to renounce Christianity in favour of Islam, they were removed from Gaza in chains and imprisoned in other cities for several months. Kallinikos and nine other soldiers were executed in Jerusalem on

November 11th 637, and the rest in Eleutheropolis on December 17th.²⁴⁵

But otherwise the Arab occupation of Gaza was peaceful. The city was not destroyed, nor were its people injured. It appears from the Nessana papyri that Gaza continued as the administrative centre of the region. For several years afterwards Christian officials, using the Greek language, played a part in the administration of the area, under the Arab governor.²⁴⁶ But the Arab conquest was a decisive turning-point in the history of Gaza, and its nearly one thousand years as part of the Graeco-Roman world now came to an end.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2.

1. Jos. Ant. XIV, 4,4 (74-76); B.J. I, 7,7 (155-157).
2. A. Kasher, Jerusalem Cathedra 2, 65, claims that Alexander himself reorganised Gaza as a polis. There is no reference to this in any of the sources. The city resumed minting its own coins in the reign of Ptolomey II (283-248 BC) (B.V. Head, Historia Nummorum, 805; BMCPal., lxvii). It must have had polis-status by that time.
3. Jos. Ant. XIII, 13,3 (358-364). For the date, see Schürer² I, 221.
4. Jos. Ant. XIII, 15,4 (395); B.J. I, 4,2 (87). On the Hasmonaean attitude to the Greek cities and evidence for their destruction of some and colonisation of others, see S. Applebaum in B. Levick ed., The Ancient Historian and his Materials, 62-64; SCI 5(1979/80), 168-70.
5. Y. Efron, Hekrei Hatekufah Ha-Hashmonait, 141-148, esp. 144; Kasher, Jerusalem Cathedra 2, 72.
6. Schürer² I, 245-246.
7. Jos. Ant. XIV, 5,3 (87-88). In the parallel passage, B.J. I, 8,4 (166), the list of rebuilt cities is slightly different, and Gaza is not included. But Josephus remarks that many other cities were also rebuilt, and he is never consistent in lists of this kind, so this is not significant.
8. See Ch. 1, p. 16 above.
9. See Ch. 1, p. 18 above.
10. Chronicon Paschale, Olympiad 179/4 (ed. Dindorf, 352).
11. ARP, 419-429. See Appendix, inscr. nos. 4-20.
12. Appian, Syr. 51; Schürer² I, 245; A.H.M. Jones, Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces, 258 and n. 42.
13. Jos. Ant. XIV, 5,3 (88).
14. Josephus speaks of the excessive taxes levied by Cassius in Judaea, Ant. XIV, 11,2 (272).
15. Jos. Ant. XIV, 14,4 (381-385); B.J. I, 14,4 (282-285); Appian, B.C. V, 75.
16. Jos. Ant. XV, 7,8-10 (252-260).
17. Schürer² I, 289-290 and n. 9; 303-304.
18. Jones, Cities, 269 and n. 57; 460-461.
19. A. Momigliano, CAH X, 323, n. 2.
20. Jos. Ant. XV, 7,3 (217).

21. Jos. Ant. XV, 4,1 (95); B.J. I, 18,5 (361); Plut. Anton. 36; Cass.Dio XLIX 32 (4-5).
22. Jos. Ant. XV, 6-7 (187-195); B.J. I, 20, 1-3 (386-393).
23. Jos. Ant. XV, 7, 3 (217); B.J. I, 20, 3 (396).
24. Jos. B.J. I, 21, 1-11 (401-425).
25. Jos. Ant. XVII, 11, 4 (320); cf. B.J. II, 6, 3 (97).
26. Jos. Ant. XVII, 13, 5 (355); XVIII, 1, 1 (2); Schürer² I, 360, nn. 35, 36.
27. B. Isaac, 'The Decapolis in Syria: A Neglected Inscription', ZPE 44 (1981), 67-74.
28. Isaac, 71-72.
29. Loc. cit. n. 25 above. The text printed by Niese: Γάζαν γὰρ καὶ Γάδαρα καὶ Ἴππον, Ἑλληνίδες εἰσὶν πόλεις, ἀπορρήξας... is not acceptable Greek. Nor do I see any convincing reason for his rejection of the traditional reading: Γάζα γὰρ καὶ Γάδαρα καὶ Ἴππος Ἑλληνίδες εἰσὶν πόλεις, ἃς ἀπορρήξας... It is supported by the MSS (except for the ἃς, which appears only in an ancient epitome and the Latin version, which reads civitates quas), and is accepted by other editors, e.g. Dindorf (Paris 1865) and Marcus (Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass./London, 1963). It is antithetical to the first part of the sentence: καὶ ἦσαν πόλεις αἱ Ἀρχελαῶ ὑποτέλουν Στρατωνῶς τε πύργος καὶ Σεβαστῆ σὺν Ἰόππῃ καὶ Ἱεροσολύμοις, and makes perfectly good sense.
30. See Ch. 4, p. 91 below.
31. Schürer² II, 101-102.
32. Jos. B.J. II, 18, 1 (460).
33. Schürer² II, 102.
34. Jos. B.J. IV, 11, 5 (662-663).
35. Schürer² I, 514.
36. R. Syme, CAH XI, 138.
37. Ptolemy, V, 15, 1, 2.
38. Euseb. Onomasticon ed. Klostermann, 50.
39. MM, Pl. 9, p. 75; Mosaikkarte, 158.
40. D. Barag, IEJ 23 (1973), 50-52; AE 1973 (1976), 559, 559 bis.

41. Marc. Diac., 99.
42. Chron. Pasch. ed. Dindorf, 474.
43. BMCPal., lxxiii-lxxiv; 150-151; Schürer² I, 102 and n. 82.
44. Schürer² I, 541-542.
45. A. Kindler, 'Ti'ud numismati lebikkuro shel Hadrianus be-Eretz Israel,' Shnaton Museion Ha'aretz, Tel Aviv 1974/5, 61-67. Kindler states that coins of Ascalon have also been found, dated by the fourth and fifth years from Hadrian's epidemia.
46. P. Graindor, Athènes sous Hadrien (1934, reprint New York 1973), 3, and the epigraphic evidence cited there. On the coinage, see Graindor, 111-112; Head, Hist. Nummorum, 389-390; idem, BMCAttica, lix.
- 46a. L. Mildenberg, The Coinage of the Bar Kokhba War, 82, 88, 101-102.
47. M. Smallwood, The Jews under Roman Rule, 476-477.
48. M. Smallwood, 476-478, 479-480.
49. Stark, 551.
50. Smallwood, 463.
51. Smallwood, 482.
52. Cass. Dio LXXI, 27, 3²; SHA M. Avit. 25, 11-12; Smallwood, 482-483.
53. SHA Severus, 6, 7; Cass. Dio LXXV, 6.
54. SHA Pesc. Nigr. 7, 9; Smallwood, 484-485.
55. Smallwood, 487-488.
56. SHA Severus, 9, 5-8.
57. Smallwood, 490 and evidence cited there.
58. SHA Severus 17, 1; Cass. Dio LXXV 13, 1.
59. Cass. Dio LXXVII 22, 1 - 23, 4.
60. See Appendix, no. 2.
61. See p. 47 below.
62. BMCPal., lxxiii, 168.
63. Smallwood, 532-533, suggests that the non-Jewish population of Palestine may not have been hostile to Palmyra, but offers no evidence.
64. Smallwood, 533.

65. Euseb. Onom. 6, 20; Not. Dig. Orient. 34, 30. See ch. 1, p. 28; Ch. 4, pp. 92-93
66. Euseb. On. 130, 7; Not. Dig. Orient., 34, 19; Cod. Theodos. VII, 4, 30; Abel, RB 49 (1940), 70-72.
67. Stark, 613.
68. Euseb, H.E. 8, 13.
69. Euseb. Mart. Pal. 3, 8.
70. Marc. Diac. 20. Grégoire-Kugener, n. ad loc., p. 97, attribute the martyrdom of Major and Thea to the same persecution, and identify Thea with the unnamed woman from Gaza whose heroic death is described by Eusebius, Mart. Pal. 8.
71. Stark, 614.
72. Soz. H.E. II, 5.
73. Euseb. V. Const. IV, 38 (PG 20, col. 1188).
74. For a similar grant of polis-status to a Christian town by Constantine see F.G.B. Millar, The Emperor in the Roman World, 410. Millar quotes the long inscription, MAMA VII 305, which states Constantine's reasons for the grant, among them the Christianity of the town's citizens.
75. Soz. H.E. V, 3.
76. Palmer, Desert of the Exodus, 552; Abel, Géog. Pal. II, 203; see also ch. 1 above, pp. 25-26.
77. Marc. Diac. 57, 58. When citing Marcus' text, I shall use chapter numbers, as above. When referring to Grégoire-Kugener's introduction or commentary, I shall give page numbers.
78. Marc. Diac. pp. 123-124. On the question of the authenticity of the Vita Porphyrii and its possible revision by a later editor, see n. 104 below.
79. Raabe, Petrus der Iberer, 56-57. Evagr. Schol., H.E. II, 5; III, 33 (PG 86 II, coll. 2513; 2668-2669); Stark, 624.
80. The Synecdemus Hieroclis probably dates mainly from the mid-fifth century, but was revised during the reign of Justinian. Georgius Cyprius is probably of the time of Justinian. See Jones, Cities, Appendix III, 502-509. See also Table XXXIX, p. 534. Here a bishop of Maioumas is recorded as having attended the Council of Jerusalem of 518. Maioumas also appears in the Notitiae Antiochiae et Ierosolymae Patriarchatum (Tobler, Itinera Hierosolymitana, 342), which Tobler, pp. xlvij-il, dates to the second half of the fifth century, or the first half of the sixth.
81. Marc. Diac. 20; Socrates, H.E. II, 15; 23 (PG 67, coll. 212; 256-257); Soz., H.E. III, 8.

82. Jerome, Vita Hilarionis (PL 23, col. 29ff.); Soz. H.E. III, 14.
83. See Ch. 1, p. 25.
84. V.H. 2 (col. 29).
85. V.H. 3 (col. 30).
86. V.H. 4 (col. 30); 12 (col. 33).
87. V.H. 13-23 (coll. 33-40).
88. V.H. 22 (coll. 39-40).
89. V.H. 20 (coll. 36-37).
90. See Ch. 3, p. 74 below.
91. Y. Dan, 'Circus Factions (Blues and Greens) in Byzantine Palestine', The Jerusalem Cathedra I, 105-119, esp. 108.
92. See Ch. 1, p. 26 above.
93. Soz., H.E. V, 15.
94. Jerome, V.H. 25 (col. 41).
95. See pp. 47-48 below.
96. Z. Rubin, 'Christianity in Byzantine Palestine', The Jerusalem Cathedra 3, 97-113, esp. 103-105.
97. V.H. 14 (coll. 34-35).
98. V.H. 24-29 (coll. 40-43).
99. V.H. 33 (col. 46).
100. V.H. 35; 41 (coll. 47-48; 50).
101. V.H. 44-47 (coll. 52-53); Soz., H.E. III, 14.
102. Soz., H.E. V, 9.
103. K.W. Russel, 'The earthquake of May 19 AD 363' BASOR 238 (1980), 47-64.
104. See Grégoire-Kugener's introduction, pp. vii-lxxxix, for their discussion of the authenticity of Marcus' account, and their theory of its later revision, probably in the late fifth, or early sixth century.
105. Marc. Diac. 19.
106. Marc. Diac. 17; 19-25.
107. Marc. Diac. 26-27.

108. Jerome, Epistola CVII (PL 22, col. 870). Jerome maintained his interest in the struggle over these temples. Some time later, in his commentary on Isaiah 17, 3, he wrote:
 hoc et nostris temporibus videmus esse completum.
 Serapium Alexandriae et Marnae templum Gazae in
 ecclesias Domini surrexerunt.
109. Marc. Diac. 32-34. September 400 is the most likely date, but uncertain. The whole chronology of Porphyry's visit to Constantinople is confused. Grégoire-Kugener's solution, pp. xxix-xxxiii, attempting to reconcile Marcus' account with known historical dates, such as that of the birth of Theodosius II, rests on the assumption that the later editor tried to telescope events and to give the impression that a visit which, in reality, lasted 18 months, was much shorter.
110. Marc. Diac. 37-41. Arcadius' remark (41): οἶδα ὅτι ἡ πόλις ἐκεῖνη κατείδωλος ἐστίν, ἀλλ'εὐγνωμονεῖ περὶ τὴν εἰσφορὰν τῶν δημοσίων πολλὰ συντελοῦσα,
 which might be considered useful evidence for the economic status of Gaza at that time, is unfortunately suspect. Not only is it part of a conversation at which Marcus was certainly not present, but it appears in the part of the work most thoroughly revised by the later editor, and Grégoire-Kugener suggest that it may be influenced by Novella CIII of Justinian, which, with reference to Caesarea, uses the phrase:
 φόρων τε μεγέθει καὶ
 εὐγνωμοσύνης ὑπερβολῇ. pp. xliii-xliv.
111. Marc. Diac. 42-54. On pilgrim traffic to Gaza, see Ch. 4, pp. 96-98 below.
112. Marc. Diac. 57-71.
113. Marc. Diac. 75-79.
114. Marc. Diac. 84: p. 135.
115. Marc. Diac. 92. For the festivals described by Choricus, see p. 54 below. The Eudoxiana is not among the churches described by Choricus. It is possible that it was renamed, because of official disfavour towards the memory of Eudoxia. On the other hand, Choricus' silence may simple mean that the church was well maintained and in no need of repair in his time.
116. Marc. Diac. 95-99. It is worth noting that the troops were summoned all the way from Caesarea. There were apparently none stationed nearer to Gaza within the borders of Palaestina Prima. Menois, with its cavalry garrison was within Palaestina Salutaris. Cooperation across provincial boundaries was unusual.
117. Marc. Diac. 103.
118. See Ch. 3, pp. 79-80 below.
119. Marc. Diac. 4.

120. Marc. Diac. 17, 22, 63, 64.
121. Marc. Diac. 20.
122. Marc. Diac. 21.
123. Marc. Diac. 96-98.
124. Marc. Diac. 59 and note *ad loc.* p. 48; complementary note, p. 126. The word **τετραμφοδον** is not recorded elsewhere, but its sense is clear: it is apparently a synonym for the more usual **τετραπυλον** or **τετραπλάτεια**. Grégoire-Kugener suggest that the reference could be to the large central forum of Gaza, where the main streets, the cardo and the decumanus, met. It is interesting that the best photographs of the Madeba Map (Mosaikkarte, 158, 159) show a structure in the centre of the forum. The relief of Aphrodite had of course been destroyed long before the map was made, and I suggested above (Ch. 1, p. 19) that what is shown is the elaborate city clock, but it is possible that the clock was erected on the spot where the Aphrodite had once stood. Prof. S. Applebaum has suggested to me privately that the word tetramphodon could suggest that the city was divided into four amphoda (city quarters), meeting in the middle. He points out that a number of other cities in the area, e.g. Scythopolis and some towns in Egypt were divided into amphoda.
125. Marc. Diac. 64 and notes pp. 146-147. Grégoire-Kugener print in their text **Ἡρωεῖτον** the form suggested by most of the MSS, but are in doubt as to which hero could be intended. They make the very attractive suggestion that the original reading could have been **Ἰῶνον** easily corrupted because of the rarity of the form. Io was closely connected with Gaza. Steph. Byz. s.v. Γάζα states: **ἐκλήθη δὲ καὶ Ἰῶνη, ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰοῦς προσπλευσάσης καὶ μεινάσης [αὐτῆς] ἐκεῖ.**
- He also writes s.v. **Ἰόνιον πέλαγος: [καὶ] τὸ ἀπὸ Γάζης μέχρις Αἰγύπτου. Ἰῶνη γὰρ καὶ ἡ Γάζα ἐκαλεῖτο ἀπὸ Ἰοῦς βοῦν ἔχουσα πλησίον ἐν τῇ εἰκόνι.**

Io, or her symbol, the heifer, often appears on Gaza's coins (BMCPal. lxxv, 147; Stark, 585-587). It seems unlikely that a goddess held in such high regard by the people of Gaza would not have been honoured by a public temple in the city. Stark, however, suggest (p. 587) that the Kore whose temple is attested by Marcus should be identified with Io (and Hecate with Artemis, who also does not appear to have a temple of her own, although she too is represented on Gaza's coins (see n. 131 below)). Stark, who knew Marcus' narrative only in a Renaissance Latin translation, which apparently read: Hierion seu sacerdotium, suggested **Ἡραῖτον**, a form that in the Byzantine period was easily corrupted to **ἱερεῖτον**. 'Also', he says, 'erhalten wir in Gaza ein Heraheiligtum neben dem des griechischen Zeus' (p. 588). But there is no evidence of any kind for a cult of Hera at Gaza, nor for that of the Olympian Zeus, whose place was taken by the local Marnas, who was, however, identified with the Cretan Zeus (Marc. Diac. 64; Stark, 576-580; BMCPal. lxxv-lxxvii).

It is worth noting that the temple of Apollo is recorded as having

- already existed in the Hellenistic Gaza destroyed by Alexander Jannaeus. The members of the city council took refuge there during the fighting, but were eventually killed (Jos. Ant. XIII 13,3 (364). This indicates a certain continuity in the religious cults of the city.
126. Marc. Diac. 2, referring to the church built on its site.
127. Marc. Diac. 75.
128. BMCPal. lxxv-lxxvi, 146-147, Pl. XV 10, 11; XVI 6; XLI 9; G.F. Hill, in the introduction to his translation of Marcus Diaconus, Life of Porphyry xvii, suggests that the temple of Marnas was founded in the reign of Hadrian, possibly following his visit of 130, when the series of coins representing the Marneion begins.
129. Marc. Diac. 65, 66, 69.
130. Marc. Diac. 65.
131. The coins mentioned above (n. 128) show two cult images within the temple: Marnas, represented as a young, standing, nude figure, possibly carrying a bow, and Artemis, dressed as a huntress in a short tunic and also carrying a bow (BMCPal. lxxvi-lxxvii). In 1880 an enormous statue was discovered on Tell el-Ajjul to the south of Gaza and subsequently removed to the Museum of Constantinople. It represents a seated, partially draped, bearded figure, undoubtedly that of Zeus. C.R. Conder (PEFQSt. 1882, 147-148; SWP II, 254) identifies it with Marnas, and suggests that the priests smuggled it out of the temple and buried it to protect it from the Christians at the time of the destruction of the temples. But it is difficult to imagine how a statue of this size could have been removed and conveyed secretly through the city streets without alerting the Christians. Moreover, this seated, bearded Zeus is very different from the youthful, standing Marnas of the coins. Hill (BMCPal. lxxi, n. 2) suggests that an earlier period Marnas may have been represented as the ordinary Hellenistic Zeus, but offers no suggestions as to the circumstances under which the statue could have been buried.
132. Marc. Diac. 66, 69.
133. Marc. Diac. 76.
134. Marc. Diac. 77.
135. Marc. Diac. 18. Irenion may be identical with the Irenaeus, bishop of Gaza, who attended the Council of Antioch in 363 (Soz., H.E. VI 4). See also Appendix no. 4, the epitaph of a presbyter Irenaeus, dated 450. The name evidently was popular among the Christians of Gaza and the towns of the Negev. It is found also at Oboda and Mampsis.
136. Marc. Diac. 18; nn. pp. 20, 94-95.
137. Marc. Diac. 20.
138. Grégoire-Kugener, lviii-lvix; Choric. Laud. Marc. II, 19. Stark, 625, thinks that Choricus is referring to the martyrium of Timotheus, but the 'Old Church' fits Choricus' description. The church of St.

Victor also stood to the west of Gaza, between the city and Maloumas (see Ch. 1, pp. 24-25 above), but it was well-known and important, and would surely have been mentioned by name by Marcus and (even if indirectly) Choricus.

139. Marc. Diac. 63.
140. Marc. Diac. 25.
141. Marc. Diac. 28-31. On the name **Αλιτάς** see Grégoire-Kugener, p. 109. They suggest that the name may be derived from that of Hadrian.
142. Marc. Diac. 95.
143. Marc. Diac. 66.
144. Marc. Diac. 68. See Ch. 4, p. 99 below.
145. Marc. Diac. 22, 23, 24.
146. Marc. Diac. 98, 100, 102, n.p. 141.
147. Marc. Diac. 102 and n. ad loc.
148. Marc. Diac. 22.
149. Marc. Diac. 95.
150. Marc. Diac. 32.
151. Abel, Géog. de la Pal. II, 170-171; Avi-Yonah, Holy Land, 121, Y. Dan, 'Palaestina Salutaris (Tertia) and its capital', IEJ 32 (1982), 134-137.
152. See p. 41 above and works cited n. 40.
153. Marc. Diac. 99.
154. A.H.M. Jones, The Later Roman Empire (LRE) III, App. II, 347ff.
155. Cod. Theod. VII, iv, 30.
156. Evag.Schol. loc. cit. n. 78 above.
157. An anonymous biography of him was preserved in a Syriac version, which has been edited, together with a German translation, by R. Raabe: Petrus der Iberer.
158. On the rhetorical school of Gaza in general, see Stark, 631-645; C. Seitz, Die Schule von Gaza; N.G. Wilson, Scholars of Byzantium, 30-33.
159. Aeneas of Gaza, epist. 18 (ed. Positano).
160. Appendix, no. 46.
- 160a. Citizenship of more than one polis is not a widely attested phenomenon. But for one example, see CIL II, 5941 = ILS, 6954.

161. Tot.Orb.Descr. (Müller, Geog.Graec.Min. II, 519B). The Latin text reads bonos auditores. Müller suggests that this arises from an original ἀκροαματα.
162. Jerome, V.H. 2. See p. 44 above.
163. Stark, 636-637; H. Gartner, RE s.v. Zosimus 4.
164. Stark, 641-642; Freudenthal, RE s.v. Aineias 4.
165. Enea di Gaza, Epistole, ed. L.M. Positano.
166. The Suda (Suidae Lexicon, ed. A. Adler IV, Stuttgart, 1935) s.v. Timotheos; Stark, 644; Seier, RE s.v. Timotheos 18. See also the panegyric to Anastasius by Procopius of Gaza (PG 87 III, coll. 2812-2813).
167. M. Haupt, 'Excerpta ex Timotheo Gazaeo', Hermes 3 (1869), 15ff; F.S. Bodenheimer & A. Rabinowitz, Timotheus of Gaza on Animals.
168. Stark, 643-645; Theile, RE s.v. Ioannes 17, Gazes. The Anacreontics are included in P. Matranga, Anecdota Graeca (Rome 1850), 575, 633-641.
169. P. Friedländer, Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentarius: Kunstbeschreibungen Justinianischer Zeit.
170. Matranga, Anec. Graec., 636.
171. Stark, 637-639; W. Aly, RE s.v. Prokopios 20, coll. 260-261.
- 171a. Procopii Gazaei Epistolae et Declamationes edd. A. Garzya & N.J. Loenertz. This edition also includes a few short speeches on mythological subjects.
172. Choric. Or.Fun. in Proc. 15.
173. Choric. ibid. 12-13.
174. Proc. Gaz. epist. 84 (ed. Garzya & Loenertz); Jones, LRE III, 998.
175. The panegyric on Anastasius, PG 87 III, coll. 2794-2825.
176. For his theological writings, see PG 87 I-II.
177. W. Aly, RE s.v. Prokopios 20, coll. 263-265. Two short pieces, a description of Sancta Sophia in Constantinople and a lament for the damage caused to that church in an earthquake, are included in PG 87 III, coll. 2827-2842.
178. Choric. Or.Funeb. in Proc; Aly, RE s.v. Prokopios 20, coll. 260-262.
179. Choric. Or.Nupt. in Proc; Aly, RE s.v. Prokopios 20a, coll. 272-273.
180. Choricus Gazaeus, Orationes, ed. R. Foerster & E. Richsteig. I quote Choricus by the short title of the speech and chapter no., with the page and line no. of this edition in brackets.

181. Laud.Marc. I, II.
182. Or.Funeb. in Mariam; Or.Funeb. in Proc.
183. Or.Nupt. in Zach.; Or.Nupt. in Proc.
184. Laud. Arat. et Steph. On the consularis Stephanus see n. 210 below. The dux Aratius is to be identified with the man of that name mentioned by Procopius of Caesarea (Bell.Pers. I, 12, 20-22; 15, 31-33), one of three brothers of the well-known Armenian family, the Kamsarakan, all of whom had military careers under Justinian (E. Stein, Histoire du Bas Empire II (Paris/Bruges 1949, reprint Amsterdam 1968), 300 n. 1). Choricus describes how Aratius recaptured the island of Jotabe in the gulf of Aila, an important trading-post, which had been overrun and occupied by Jewish bandits from the neighbouring coast (Laud.Arat. et Steph. 67-76 (65, 19-67, 19). See also Abel, RB 47 (1938), 512ff.
185. Laud.Summ. Choricus describes the magister militum Summus as a native of Palestine, who was appointed to his post as a result of his involvement in relief efforts after the disastrous earthquake in Antioch in 526 (Laud.Summ. 5-11 (70, 13-72, 17)). While in office, he was active in controlling raids by nomads (ibid 20-22 (75, 1-23)) and in tax collection (ibid 24-26 (76, 12-77, 7)). He is mentioned by Procopius (Bell.Pers. II, 1, 7-12) as leading diplomatic negotiations over a dispute between Saracen tribes loyal to the Empire and others which supported Persia. These negotiations were unsuccessful and were apparently among the factors leading to the outbreak of war with Persia in 540 (ibid 3, 47; 4, 21; 10, 16; Anecd. 11, 12). The brother of Summus mentioned by Choricus (Laud.Summ. 33 (79, 6-17)) is named by Procopius as Julianus. He took part in unsuccessful negotiations with the Ethiopians and Himyarites (Bell.Pers. I, 20, 9; II, 1, 7).
186. Apol.Mim. 104 (368, 9-10); Laud.Summ. 25 (76, 16).
187. Laud.Marc. II, 5-7 (29, 6-17).
188. Laud.Marc. I, 89 (25, 2-4).
189. Anton.Placent. 33 (ed. Geyer, CCSL 175, 145).
190. Laud.Marc. I, 83-89 (23, 12-25, 4); Laud.Marc. II, 60-69 (43, 1-45, 5).
191. Laud.Marc. II, 76 (46, 1-2); Laud.Marc. I, 13 (6, 8-9).
192. Διᾶλεξις XVI (196-197). On Johannes of Gaza and his poems for the 'Day of Roses', see p. 51 above.
193. Stark, 596. Hölscher, RE s.v. Maiumas 1, coll. 610-613, argues that the name of the festival was derived from Maia, while that of Gaza's port (and other harbour towns) was connected with some form of $\Pi\eta$ or Π' .
194. Or. in Iust.Brupal. (175-179).

195. Apol.Mim. (344-380); See also: A. Rabinowitz, 'Divrei Choricus Ha-Azati al Eretz Israel', Sefer Yohanan Loevy, 182.
196. Apol.Mim. 114 (370, 18-20). See also Y. Dan, op.cit. n. 91 above, 105-107.
197. Apol.Mim. 107 (369, 3-8); 116-18 (371, 3-18); 150-154 (378, 24-379, 24).
198. Appendix, no. 14 below. On the other hand, Jones, Greek City 253, states that gymnastic education declined as a result of opposition by the Church and had died out by the fourth century. It is possible that the classical enthusiasms of the members of the rhetorical school had led to the local revival of gymnastics in sixth century Gaza?
199. Or.Funeb. in Mariam 5 (101, 11-12). His brothers also had successful careers. One, Anastasius, became bishop of Eleutheropolis. See the rubric to this speech, p. 99.
200. Laud.Marc. II, 7-8 (29, 17-30, 10).
201. It appears that in other Palestinian towns also the bishops took over the functions of the civic magistrates. See Y. Dan, The City in Eretz-Israel During the Late Roman & Byzantine Periods (Hebrew. Henceforward Dan, The City), 90-102.
202. Laud.Marc. II, 24 (34, 10-20).
203. Or.Funeb. in Mariam 21 (105, 21-22).
204. For the dating of Choricus' speeches, see C. Kirsten, Quaestiones Choricianae 7-24.
205. Laud.Marc. I, II; Stark, 626-630; G. Downey, Gaza in the Early Sixth Century, 126-139; Abel, RB 40 (1931), 5-31, esp. 12-27. On the mosaics, see Ch. 4, p. 96 below.
206. Laud.Marc. II, 17-18 (32, 14-33, 4).
207. Laud.Marc. II, 19-20 (33, 5-18); Stark, 625. See p. 49 above.
208. Or.Funeb. in Proc. 52 (127, 23-128, 5).
209. Laud.Marc. I, 7 (4, 8-18); Laud.Marc II, 16 (32, 5-13); Laud. Aret. et Steph. 54 (63, 4-9).
210. Stephanus is also mentioned in Novella 103, 2. Among his achievements recorded by Choricus are an expedition against nomads from Egypt, who were harrassing the border towns, the suppression of bandits on the roads around Caesarea, the control of a night-time riot in that city, improvements in its food-supply and the restoration of its aqueduct (Laud.Arat. et Steph. 33-49 (57, 19-62, 5)). He was clearly popular and admired. A delegation of priests was dispatched to Constantinople, to report to the Emperor on his achievements (ibid 57 (63, 22-64, 1)).
211. Ibid. 54 (63, 2-4).

212. ibid 54 (63, 4-9); Laud.Marc. I, 30 (10, 11-18).
213. Laud.Arat. et Steph. 55 (63, 10-16). Rabinowitz, op.cit. n. 195 above, 180, n. 62. It seems to have been necessary constantly to improve the supply of water to Gaza in this period. Choricus also reports that the father of one of his pupils provided the town with an abundant supply, while serving as astynomos (Or.Nupt. in Proc. 34 (94, 25-95, 2)). The reason for this lack of water is not clear. Gaza had plenty of springs (See Ch. I, p. 12 above). Perhaps earlier installations had fallen into disrepair (like the aqueduct at Caesarea).
214. Laud.Arat. et Steph. 54 (63, 4-9); Laud.Marc. I, 7 (4, 16-19).
215. Appendix, no. 33.
216. Jones, Greek City, 456.
217. Jones, loc.cit. last note.
218. Laud.Marc. I, 7 (4, 11-14).
219. Laud.Marc. II, 16 (32, 7-9).
220. Laud.Marc. II, 23-24 (34, 4-20).
Another possible source of insecurity is suggested in a private communication by Prof. S. Applebaum. He writes: "Some time in the later Empire a coastal village just north of Shavei Tziyyon (Nea Kome?) was fortified with walls and bastions. This suggests a threat from the sea - perhaps piracy. I discovered these fortifications during World War II; the bastions have since disappeared". In this context it is perhaps worth noting that Maioumas was also strongly fortified, a part of a substantial wall, or possibly a tower, apparently dating from the 4th. or 5th. c., being uncovered there close to the sea in the excavations of 1976 (Ovadhah, IEJ 27 (1977), 178).
221. Laud.Arat. et Steph. 35-36 (58, 8-59, 5). See also Aeneas of Gaza, epist. XXIV, which describes how a poor man going on a journey to buy dates was attacked and robbed. The strategos Marcianus captured and punished some of the bandits and compensated the victim for the money he had lost. Presumably, this incident took place somewhere in the Negev. See Ch. 4, pp. 94-96 for trade in dates between Gaza and Nessana. The precise status of this strategos is not clear.
222. Stephanus repels Saracens from Egypt, who were attacking border towns (Laud.Arat. et Steph. 33-34 (57, 19-58, 7)); Aratius, with a small band of troops, frightens off a group of nomads who were harrassing travellers in rough country (ibid 28 (56, 15-21)); Summus assists another general in crushing a group of nomads who had been raiding the country freely (Laud.Summ. 20 (75, 1-10)); Summus leads an expedition to Egypt to come to the assistance of nomad tribes there, who were under attack by others (ibid 22 (75, 17-22)).
223. P. Mayerson, 'The First Muslim Attacks on Southern Palestine', TAPA 95 (1964), 155-199, esp. 183-88; B. Isaac, 'Bandits in Judaea and Arabia', HSCP 88 (1984), 171-203, esp. 198-201.

224. Mayerson, 188-190; Isaac, loc.cit. last note.
225. Mayerson, 192.
226. A.A. Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, 194-198.
227. Vasiliev, 195, 199-200; Mayerson, 190-192.
228. Theophanes, Chronographia (ed. de Boor), 335-336.
229. Meyer, 74-75; Mayerson, 160-161.
230. Mayerson, 169-177; A.N. Stratos, Byzantium in the Seventh Century II, 28-30, 44-48.
231. Stratos, 46.
232. Theophanes, loc.cit. n. 228 above; Nicephorus, Opuscula Historica (ed. C. de Boor) 23-24.
233. See e.g. A. Guillou, 'La Prise de Gaza par les Arabes', Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique 81 (1957), 396-404, esp. 402; Stratos, 48.
234. Mayerson, 160-162, 196-197.
235. Theophanes, Nicephorus, loc.citt. nn. 228, 232 above. Mayerson, 166-167, argues that Theophanes' account, describing Sergius' meeting the Arabs with only a small force, refers to a separate incident. The accounts of the battle of Dathin appear to be hopelessly confused. See also Stratos, 49-50. Meyer, 73-75, gives a totally different version of the battle, relying, apparently, on Arabic sources other than those preferred by most scholars. For the casualties, see Chronica Minora, CSCO (SS), 3, 4, p. 147ff.
236. e.g. by Meyer, 76. Abel, Histoire de la Palestine II, 393-405, suggests a first conquest in 634 and a second one in 637.
237. C.H. Becker, 'The Expansion of the Saracens - the East', Cambridge Mediaeval History II (Cambridge 1913, repr. 1957), 340-341; Stratos, 50.
238. Guillou, op.cit. n. 233 above, 403.
239. Stratos, 54-57.
240. Stratos, 74-81.
241. Guillou, 396-401; Stratos, 78-79.
242. This work was edited by H. Delahaye in 1904. It dates the events it records by regnal years of Heraclius and by indictions. Some problems in the dating, exacerbated by textual corruptions, were clarified by Delahaye, whose corrections were accepted by Guillou, who uses the work as the basis for his reconstruction of the chronology of the conquest.
243. Guillou, 398-400, 403.

244. Guillou, 399.
245. Guillou, 399-400.
246. Excavations at Nessana III, PColt 55 (pp. 153-155) a receipt for taxes paid, dated 682. The day and month are recorded by the traditional calendar of Gaza. PColt 60-67 (pp. 175-197) bilingual Arabic/Greek entagia, demands for taxes to be paid in kind, dated between 674 and 677.

CHAPTER 3: THE POLITICAL STATUS AND CIVIC ADMINISTRATION OF
ROMAN AND BYZANTINE GAZA

A: THE POLITICAL STATUS OF GAZA

There can be no doubt that in the Hellenistic period Gaza had the status of a polis, though it is not known at what stage this status was achieved. Josephus explicitly calls it a πόλις Ἑλληνικὴ¹ and, in his account of the sack of the city by Alexander Jannaeus,² refers to the five hundred members of the βουλή, the city council. Moreover, the coins of the second century BC bearing the inscription Γαζαίων δήμου and similar phrases also indicate a polis constitution.³ When Pompey gained control of the area, Gaza, together with the other Greek cities liberated from the Jews, was returned to its original citizens, but attached to the province of Syria and placed under the supervision of its governor.⁴ From that time onward, with the exception of the reign of Herod, Gaza was incorporated into the Roman provincial system. It is, therefore, worth examining the status of the city under that system.

Cities in the Roman provinces fell into two main categories, the free cities, civitates liberae, and the subject cities, civitates stipendiariae. The first group was sub-divided into civitates foederatae, the freedom of which had originally been secured by a formal treaty between them and the Romans at the time when the latter gained control of the area (though by the second and first centuries BC the foedus aequum was increasingly being replaced by the foedus inaequum, granted by the Romans to a subject people as a privilege), and the civitates sine foedere immunes et liberae, which received their freedom not as an acknowledged fact, but as a privilege granted by a senatus consultum, or a special lex civitatis, and liable to cancellation at any time the Romans wished. Both types were considered, strictly speaking, as excluded from the province in which they were situated. They were independent administratively, judicially and financially, and were exempt from Roman taxation, though obliged to provide certain services on request. The civitates stipendiariae, on the other hand, were totally subject to the Roman government. They were liable to taxation, and the governor of the province had the right to intervene in their internal administration as he wished, though in practice the subject cities were generally permitted to run their own affairs without too much interference.⁵

There is extant an inscription found at Ostia and dedicated to Gordian III, which describes Gaza as: ἡ πόλις ἡ τῶν Γαζαίων ἱερὰ καὶ ἄστυλος καὶ αὐτόνομος, πιστὴ (καὶ) εὐσεβὴς, λαμπρὰ καὶ μεγάλη⁶.

At first glance, the title αὐτόνομος which is the normal Greek term for a civitas libera, whether foederata or not,⁷ might suggest that Gaza had this status, being totally independent and free from taxation. But it appears that this is not necessarily the case. Some civitates stipendiariae were also granted the title libera and certain privileges of self-government, jurisdiction and coinage. But they remained subject to taxation and their autonomy was not guaranteed by a foedus or lex civitatis, but was awarded, and could be cancelled, at the discretion of the provincial governor.⁸

The title **αὐτόνομος** also appears on the coins and inscriptions of several other cities in the area, namely Ascalon, Dora, Ptolemais, Gadara, Abila, Capitolias, Diocaesarea and Gerasa.⁹ It seems improbable that so many cities in such a small area should have been exempt from taxation. Moreover, Pliny specifically describes Ascalon as an oppidum liberum, as if its status was unusual.¹⁰ Ascalon had long been recognised as a free city, even by such a ruthless enemy of the Greek poleis as Alexander Jannaeus,^{10a} and the Romans evidently ratified its independent status, presumably as a civitas sine foedere libera et immunis. It was not among the cities attached to the province of Syria by Pompey, and was the one city of Judaea that was not awarded to Herod by Octavian.¹¹

So, if Ascalon was the only truly free city in the area, it follows that Gaza, like the other cities, was granted only the title libera and minor privileges, while remaining legally a civitas stipendiaria and liable to taxation. It is not known at what date this grant of titular freedom was made. One possible date might be 4 BC, when, on the death of Herod, Gaza was excluded from the kingdom of Judaea and returned to the supervision of the governor of Syria.¹² It was at around that time that Gaza was evidently granted the right to resume minting its own coins, for the first time since the destruction of the city by Alexander Jannaeus.¹³ The right of coinage was one of the privileges associated with the grant of titular freedom,¹⁴ and it seems reasonable to assume that Gaza achieved them both at the same time.

The phrase used in the inscription to Gordian **ἱερὰ καὶ ἄσυλος καὶ αὐτόνομος**, was not merely an expression of the city's status under the Roman Empire, but a long-established formula, dating back to Hellenistic times, when it was widely used throughout the Seleucid Empire. Other Palestinian cities that used these titles are Ascalon, Dora, Ptolemais, Hippos, Gadara, Abila, Scythopolis, Dioscaesaria and Gerasa.¹⁵ The formula demonstrates the steps by which cities succeed in establishing their independence from Seleucid rule, in a process analysed by Rostovtzeff.¹⁶ He argues that the first stage was the grant of the title **ἱερὰ**, which may have involved some exemption from royal taxation. The second stage was the addition of **ἄσυλος**. Asyilia implied the right of a city to offer sanctuary to a fugitive from royal authority. This right involved some degree of independence from the jurisdiction of the kings, and could be of considerable financial benefit to the cities, as a result of a possible increase in population, and of the gratitude of wealthy and influential suppliants towards the city which gave them shelter.¹⁷ Rostovtzeff suggests that the valuable right of asyilia may at times have been bought by cities in return for a large cash payment.¹⁸ The grant of complete autonomy completed the process, and at times was also awarded in return for payment.¹⁹

It is hard to say to what extent the right of asylum was a reality in the Roman period. The grant of even titular freedom involved some degree of independent jurisdiction, but it is hard to imagine the provincial authorities acquiescing in the flight of a fugitive from Roman justice to sanctuary within a 'free' city. But whether these titles had any concrete significance or not, they were still eagerly sought after and proudly borne by the cities, which competed with each other in prestige, and in the accumulation of high-sounding honorific titles. In the inscription quoted above, Gaza is also called **πιστὴ καὶ εὐσεβής, λαμπρὰ καὶ μεγάλη**, titles which imply no specific status, but which are purely honorific.²⁰

At some later stage Gaza appears to have been elevated to the status of a Roman colony. Originally, a colonia civium Romanorum had been a settlement of retired veterans from a legion, who were granted land, either in Italy or in a province, in which to build their own community, the site of the colony usually having been chosen for military reasons. The colony could be founded on unoccupied land, but was frequently imposed on an existing town, even a polis.²¹ From the first century AD onwards, a new type of colony developed, in which an existing city was granted the honorary title colonia without the addition of any veteran settlers. The first colony of this type in the East was Caesarea, which was raised to the status of a colony by Vespasian.²² The grant of the title of colonia was a considerable honour, involving Roman citizenship for all citizens of the city, and was the only title that could confer higher status than that of a polis.²³ The grant of the title of colonia did not, apparently, always imply the grant of all the privileges associated with it, in particular the ius Italicum, which conferred exemption from poll and land taxes.²⁴ The specific benefits bestowed by the title of colonia must have been diminished as a result of the Constitutio Antoniniana of 212, which conferred Roman citizenship on almost all free inhabitants of the Empire and placed them on an equal footing as regards taxation,²⁵ but the prestige that the title brought was apparently still sought after, and grants of colonial status were still made until the time of Constantine.²⁶

The evidence for Gaza's having become a colony consists in a lead weight found in Syria.²⁷ It bears the inscription: **Κολωνίας Γάζης ἐπὶ Ἡρώδου Διοφάντου**, and is also marked with the Phoenician mem, the monogram of the god Marnas frequently found on Gaza's coins, and with two indistinct letters, probably reading IE. Herodes son of Diophantes is the name of the magistrate under whom the weight was issued.²⁸ The meaning of the letters IE is obscure. Clermont-Ganneau suggests that they represent either a date by the 'Hadrianic' era, introduced to commemorate the Emperor's visit in 130, which is completely untenable,²⁹ or that they indicate a measure of weight. They might also be a date with the hundreds figure omitted.

This is the only direct evidence we have for Gaza's having become a colony, but it cannot be ignored. It is supported by Jerome's reference to a Gazensis duumvir,³⁰ since the existence of this magistrate indicates a Roman municipal constitution and hence colonial status.³¹

The date at which Gaza became a colony cannot be established precisely. But it must have been after the reign of Gordian III, or the title would have appeared on the inscription dedicated to him³² and on Gaza's coins. Independent minting at Gaza comes to an end under Gordian, so numismatics cannot help to establish a later date.³³ The granting of colonial status to cities lapses after the time of Constantine. Therefore, Gaza must have been awarded this honour at some time between 244 and 337.

B: THE CITY ADMINISTRATION

We have few references to the civic administration and magistrates of Gaza, and the information which we do possess is widely scattered in time. Of the Hellenistic polis we know only that its council consisted of five hundred members, and that its coins referred to the **δημος**.³⁴ In the Hellenistic period city constitutions tended to be democratic. The popular assembly was supreme, though the council carefully controlled the measures

put to the vote before it. A council of five hundred members, as at Gaza, was typical. Normally, all citizens had equal rights, although the citizenship could be limited, and all were eligible for office and council membership. The citizen body was divided into tribes, and councillors were selected from it by lot. Magistracies tended to be filled by the richer citizens, because office often entailed considerable expenditure.³⁵

When the Romans gained control of a polis, they normally permitted the retention of much of the original form of government, but introduced restrictions on council membership, for example a minimum age limit and service as a magistrate as a qualification. Once appointed, councillors held their seats for life. These changes gradually turned the council into the governing body of the city, and the popular assembly declined in importance and eventually ceased to meet. The election of magistrates was then transferred to the council. As time went on, the holding of office became an increasingly onerous financial burden, and it became difficult to find candidates willing to undertake it. Eventually, even council membership, from being a valued honour, became an oppressive duty, and drastic measures had to be taken to ensure that the seats were filled and that the city administration could continue to function.³⁶

It is not clear to what extent the popular assembly of Gaza survived into the Roman or Byzantine period, but it has been suggested that Choricus' remark that the astynomos was elected by a common decision of the people indicates that the assembly, whether in more or less restricted form, persisted even into the sixth century, at least for the purpose of electing magistrates.³⁷ This does seem, however, to be rather a large assumption to draw from one general remark.

Nor do we hear much about the council of Gaza, though Marcus Diaconus refers to the βουλευτήριον and βουλευταί, and Jerome mentions a decurio of Gaza.³⁸ Choricus makes no reference to the council, although he does mention the magistrates.

Little is known about the city's magistrates, at least before the Byzantine period, when many alterations had been made in the system of city administration. In fact, we have evidence for only two magistracies which may be assumed to have existed in Gaza in the earlier Roman period.

The evidence for the first consists in a large number of lead weights originating from Gaza, some of which bear the name of the issuing magistrate and his title ἀγοράνομος.³⁹ The agoranomos was the official in charge of the markets of a city. His duties included maintenance of the fabric of the agorae, collection of rents from stallholders, fixing of opening-hours, inspection of the quality of the goods offered for sale, control of prices and the rate of exchange, and the keeping of standard weights and the issue of authorised stamped copies for use by traders.⁴⁰ In Gaza the organisation of the public fairs, the πανηγύρις Ἀδριανῆ and the later Church festivals, must have been a heavy extra responsibility for the agoranomos, unless, of course, another official was appointed to take over these arrangements.⁴¹ Some of the weights make it clear that the agoranomos held office for only six months rather than a year, no doubt because the post was a demanding one and possibly also involved considerable financial outlay.⁴²

The other magistrate for whom we have direct evidence is the ἀστυνόμος. Choricus mentions that the father of a pupil of his improved the

water supply of Gaza while serving in this position.⁴³ Choricus is, admittedly, a very late source, but the post of astynomos is recorded as early as the Hellenistic period, and there is no reason to doubt that it existed at Gaza throughout the Roman period. In fact, astynomoi are not often mentioned in the sources, and probably existed only in the larger cities, their duties devolving on the agoranomos in smaller ones. The chief responsibility of the astynomos was the maintenance of roads and bridges, both in the city itself and in its surrounding territory. He was also in charge of street clearance, paving and rubbish disposal, as well as the supervision of the water supply, including private cisterns, aqueducts and bath-houses. In many ways the post was comparable to that of the aedile at Rome.⁴⁴

With the acquisition of colonial status in the late third or early fourth century, Gaza presumably adopted a Roman municipal constitution, as is indicated by Jerome's reference to a duumvir.⁴⁵ Sozomen, while discussing Gaza's appeal against the independence of Maioumas, says of the two towns: **κοινοὶ δὲ αὐτοῖς πολιτικοὶ ἄρχοντες καὶ στρατηγοὶ καὶ τὰ δημόσια πράγματα**⁴⁶.

Here **στρατηγός** probably translates duoviri, as it frequently does.⁴⁷

Marcus Diaconus refers to a number of city officials, mainly those introduced from the fourth century onwards, as a response to changing conditions in the cities of the Empire. The titles given by Marcus to these officials are interesting in that they differ from those usually found in other sources.

In ch. 25 Marcus lists: **ὁ δημεκδικῶν μετὰ τῶν εἰρηναρχῶν καὶ τῶν δύο πρωτευόντων** .

The title **δημεκδικῶν** does not appear elsewhere, though the form **δημεκδικος** has been found in a papyrus fragment. The sense, however, is clear. It must be equivalent to the **ἐκδικος** , or defensor civitatis. This official is first recorded in Egypt and Arabia in the early fourth century and was apparently introduced to the rest of the Empire by an act of Valentinian I in 364/5, as an imperial agent, whose function was to protect the poorer citizens of the cities from exploitation by the more influential. His powers proved to be inadequate for this task, and in 387, under Valentinian II, the defensor was demoted to the status of a municipal magistrate. This is clearly the status of the mentioned by Marcus, who leads other officials and ordinary citizens in harrassing the Christians. In 505 an act of Anastasius declared that the defensores should be elected not by the city councils, but by prominent land-owners, members of the senatorial order and by the bishops and clergy, thus raising the status and influence of the defensores and giving the Church some authority in the civil administration of the cities.⁴⁸

The **εἰρηναρχαὶ** were the commanders of the city police. The title is found throughout the East from the beginning of the second century. The post was probably created on orders from the imperial government. The eirenarchai were not elected, but appointed by the provincial governor, who selected them from a list submitted by the city. They commanded a troop of mounted police, and their chief duty was to control bandits in the city territory. Probably, they slowly declined in importance and became merely the captains of the city police.⁴⁹

In ch. 25 Marcus mentions two πρωτεύοντες, but in ch. 27 there are three.⁵⁰ The context is the first attempt to enforce the closure of the pagan temples of Gaza. The imperial official, Hilarius, arrives with a large body of troops, arrests the three proteuontes, accepts sureties from them, and then shows them the official decree ordering the closure of the temples. This incident suggests that the proteuontes were regarded as the chief officials of the city at that time, and makes it probable that they totalled three in number. Hilarius would hardly have arrested some of the board of chief magistrates and not all of them.

These proteuontes are probably to be identified with the principales often mentioned in Byzantine sources.⁵¹ This institution is somewhat obscure, but appears to have been an officially constituted inner group within the council, which controlled the administration. A principalis had to have served in all the city's magistracies prior to his appointment, which was, presumably, normally by co-option, although occasional attempts were made to order election by the whole council. On retirement a principalis was often awarded some imperial honour. There were ten principales in cities in Africa and Sicily, in some places apparently identical with the decemprimi, but at Alexandria there were five, known as the primates ordinis.⁵² If there were five at Alexandria, a total of three at Gaza sounds reasonable, and it is certainly easier to identify these proteuontes with the principales than to follow Grégoire Kugener in identifying them with the decemprimi, or δεκάπρωτοι whose responsibility it was to collect taxes and make up any shortfall from their own resources.⁵³ The development of this institution is obscure. The earliest record of the title is in an inscription from Gerasa of AD 66, but there it appears to be purely honorific.⁵⁴ By the second century it appears as a small-scale liturgy, apparently connected with the provision of imperial services within a city. Later it seems to have become more important and more onerous. During the third century decaprotοι appear on many inscriptions as the highest officials of the cities. In some places decaprotοι were replaced by eicosaprotοι.⁵⁵ But it seems unlikely that the heavy responsibility of tax gathering should be laid upon three men alone, particularly in a large and prosperous city like Gaza, and it is simpler to consider the proteuontes as principales, the leading members of the city council, than to assume that they bore any responsibilities for tax collection.

In two places, ch. 25 and ch. 99, Marcus mentions the δημοσιεύοντες who appear to have some responsibility for the maintenance of order. In ch. 25 the Christians appeal to them against the civic authorities, and in ch. 99 they denounce to the provincial official sent from Caesarea the pagans responsible for rioting and attacking the Christians. So it appears that they are not ordinary civic officials. Grégoire-Kugener associated the word δημοσιεύοντες with the δημόσιοι, who appear in other Byzantine sources as a police force, and suggest that the expression is simply an unofficial term for the βοηθοί, or troops stationed in Gaza by the provincial governor, in order to keep the peace and to protect the Christians, although it appears that their numbers were too small for them to be able to fulfil this task without reinforcements from elsewhere.⁵⁶

Finally, in the writings of Choricus it is possible to see the increasing influence of the Church in civic affairs. Bishop Marcianus, who is eulogised by Choricus, appears to have wielded authority and influence at least equal to those of the civil magistrates. He had not, however, superseded them completely. Some, at least, of the traditional officials

were still appointed. The astynomos still performed his duty of caring for the city's water supply.⁵⁷ The civic authorities were still held to be responsible for the repair of a dangerously dilapidated church, and were the subject of much public criticism when they neglected to deal with the matter. Ultimately, the bishop saw to it that the work was carried out, though there is no suggestion that he had any official responsibility to do so.⁵⁸ But it was the bishop who was active in promoting an ambitious building programme for the improvement of the amenities of Gaza, and it was also he who organised the supply of provisions to the imperial troops who visited the city during the Samaritan revolt.⁵⁹ It appears that, though it was still possible to find candidates to fill the magistracies, the old enthusiasm for civic affairs had vanished, and the energy and initiative for public service were now provided by the Church.⁶⁰

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3:

1. Jos. Ant. XVII, 11,4 (320).
2. Jos. Ant. XIII, 13,3 (364).
3. BMCPal. lxix, 143-144.
4. Jos. Ant. XIV, 4,4 (76): B.J. I, 7,7 (156-157).
5. Schürer² II, 93-94; J. Marquardt, Römische Staatverwaltung I, 71-86; A.N. Sherwin-White, The Roman Citizenship, 174-189.
6. Appendix, no. 2.
7. Marquardt, 78.
8. Ibid, 80-85.
9. Schürer² II, 94. For Gerasa, see C.H. Kraeling (ed.), Gerasa, City of the Decapolis, 390, inscr. 30 (AD 130):....Gerasa hiera et asylo(s) et autonomos
10. Pliny, N.H.V., 13/68.
- 10a. M. Stern, Tarbiz 33 (1963), 325-336, esp. 328-330, argues that Ascalon owed its immunity to attack by Jannaeus to its close alliance with the Ptolemies ruling in Alexandria.
11. Ascalon presumably gained its independence in 102/3 BC, when it introduced its own era, which continued in use throughout the Roman period (Schürer² II, 106-107).
12. Jos. Ant. XVII, 11,4 (320); B.J. II, 6,3 (97).
13. The Hellenistic coins of Gaza date from the second century BC, and its earliest imperial coins from the reign of Augustus. The earliest listed by Hill, BMCPal., 145, is dated 66 by the era of Gaza, i.e. AD 5/6. De Saulcy, Numismatique de la Terre Sainte, (Paris, 1874), 213 lists one of Gaza era 63, i.e. AD 2/3.
14. Marquardt, 79-80.
15. Schürer² II, 94. For Gerasa, see n. 9 above; for Dioscaesarea, see Schürer² II, 176.
16. SEHHW, 843-847.
17. See Strabo XVI, 2, 14 (754) on the grant of asylia to Aradus and the prosperity this brought the city.
18. SEHHW, 846.
19. Tyre is known to have paid cash for its freedom. Its autonomy was endorsed by the Romans, as well as by the Seleucid king (Strabo XVI, 2,23 (757); SEHHW, 846-847). Its freedom was maintained after the establishment of the province of Syria, but was cancelled, at least

- for a time, by Augustus (Jones, Cities, 259 and n. 45).
20. Another, later, honorific title of Gaza is the $\kappa\alpha\lambda\lambda\iota\pi\omicron\lambda\iota\varsigma$ found in the Nessana papyri (Nessana I, PColt 26).
 21. B. Levick, Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor, 1-6, 68-72.
 22. B. Isaac, 'Roman Colonies in Judaea: the Foundation of Aelia Capitolina', Talanta XII/XIII (1980/1981), 38-43.
 23. F. Millar, The Emperor in the Roman World, 407-409; Isaac, 47-48.
 24. Ptolemais was a colony in name only, without the associated privileges. Caesarea was made a colony by Vespasian, but granted exemption from taxation, though without the formal ius Italicum, only by Titus (Isaac, 38, n. 29, 41-42).
 25. Abbot & Johnson, Municipal Administration in the Roman Empire, 53-54.
 26. Marquardt, 126.
 27. Appendix, no. 42/1. For a full discussion of the whole question of Gaza's becoming a colony, see: W. Kubitschek, 'Die Kolonie Gaza', Zur Geschichte von Städten des Römischen Kaiserreiches, 31-40.
 28. cf. the numerous similar weights from Gaza, Appendix, nos. 42/1-46, 43/1-3. See also p. 78 below.
 29. The use of the Hadrianic era lapsed with Hadrian's death in 138 and, in any case, Gaza cannot have become a colony as early at this.
 30. Jerome, V.H. 20.
 31. Marquardt, 429, followed by Meyer, 55, and Schürer² II, 103 n. 84.
 32. See p. 75 above.
 33. BMCPal., Ixxiii, 168.
 34. See p. 75 above.
 35. Jones, Greek City, Ch. X, 157-69.
 36. On the administration of the Greek city under the Roman Empire, see: Jones, LRE II, Ch. XIX, 712-766; Greek City, Chs. XI, XII, 170-210.
 37. Choric. Or.Nupt. in Proc. 34(94, 25-95, 2); Dan, The City, 111.
 38. Marc. Diac. 95; Jerome, V.H. 22. See also Dan, The City, 80-82, on the council and magistrates of Gaza.
 39. Appendix nos. 42/1-26, 43/1-3.
 40. Jones, Greek City, 215-217.
 41. On the $\pi\alpha\nu\eta\gamma\upsilon\rho\iota\varsigma$ 'Αδριανῆ, see Ch. 2, p. 41.

42. Appendix, nos. 42/3, 10, 24.
43. Choric, loc.cit. n. 37, above.
44. Jones, Greek City, 213-215.
45. See p. 45 above.
46. Soz. H.E. V, 3.
47. For στρατηγός as duovir, see e.g. Acts 16, 20 (Philippi); IGRR I, 656 (Calliati); IGRR III, 1040, 1045, 1047 (all of Palmyra). See also G. Alon, 'The Strategoi in the Palestinian Cities', Jews, Judaism and the Classical World, 458-475. Alon analyses both Talmudic and Greek literary and epigraphic sources and reaches the conclusion that the strategoi were leading members of city councils. He does not, however, notice the fact that all the cities he cites as possessing strategoi were at the time coloniae, and so he does not associate strategoi with duoviri, although he comes close to this in the remark: 'At all events, we have already encountered two strategoi in Edessa (and, as has been noted, the city was a colonia then, with two heads, after the manner of the duoviri of Roman cities') (p. 467, n. 16).
48. Grégoire-Kugener, pp. 103-104; Jones, LRE I, 144-145, 479-480; II, 726-727; Greek City, 208-209. Grégoire-Kugener state that the election of the defensor was transferred to land-owners and Church officials by an act of Honorius of 409, but Jones (Greek City, 348, n. 104; see also LRE II, 758) argues that this law was never enforced in the East.
49. Grégoire-Kugener, loc.cit. n. 48 above; Jones, Greek City, 212-213; LRE II, 725-726. Jerome, V.H. 33, mentions the lictores praefecti at Gaza. Presumably, this refers to these eirenarchai and their troops.
50. Another reference to one of the proteuontes occurs in ch. 95.
51. Dan, The City, 74-79, also discusses the term proteuon, in connection with Ascalon, where there appears to have been only one, or at least one leading proteuon. He identifies this term with principalis (p. 76, n. 43) and considers it to be the equivalent of 'head of the council'. For the proteuontes at Gaza, see Dan, 80-82.
52. Jones, LRE II, 731 and nn. 41, 42.
53. Grégoire-Kugener, loc.cit. n. 48 above; Jones, Greek City, 139-140.
54. Kraeling, Gerasa, inscr. 45.
55. Marquardt, 213-214; SEHRE, 390-391.
56. Grégoire-Kugener, 104-105.
57. See pp. 78-79 above.
58. Choric. Laud.Marc. II, 17-18 (32, 14-33, 4).

59. Choric, Laud.Marc. II, 24(34, 14-33, 4).
60. See Ch. 2, pp. 55-56 on Marcianus and his building projects. On the general decline in enthusiasm for public office in the cities, see Jones, Greek City, 181-182; 192-210; LRE II, 737-757. See also Dan, The City, 90-102, on the part played by bishops in city administration.

CHAPTER 4: TRADE, INDUSTRY AND POPULATION.

A: THE SPICE TRADE.

Throughout most of the ancient period the prosperity of Gaza was derived largely from the fact that it served as an outlet to the Mediterranean for the caravan traffic in spices and other valuable merchandise from South Arabia and further east. The origins of this trade are obscure, but archaeological and numismatic evidence shows that Gaza was already active in trade between Greece and the Arab tribes to its east and south during the Persian period.¹ The close association between Gaza and the Arabs is also suggested by the reports that a strong garrison of Arab mercenaries took part in the defence of the city against Alexander the Great,² and by the story that by his capture of Gaza Alexander came into possession of large quantities of incense.³

It is in the early Ptolemaic period that the Nabataean Arabs, Gaza's chief trading partners throughout the classical period, first appear in history. Diodorus Siculus recounts in detail an expedition against them in 312 BC, led by Athenaeus, a general of Antigonos,⁴ including a detailed description of the Nabataeans' way of life at that time, based on the reports of a contemporary eye-witness, Hieronymus of Cardia, who was appointed by Antigonos to supervise the asphalt industry of the Dead Sea.⁵ This description emphasises the part played by the Nabataeans in the spice trade:

εἰώθασι γὰρ αὐτῶν οὐκ ὀλίγοι καταγεῖν ἐπὶ θάλασσαν
λιβανωτῶν τε καὶ σμύρναν καὶ τὰ πολυτελέστατα τῶν
ἀρωμάτων, διαδεχόμενοι παρὰ τῶν κομιζόντων ἐκ τῆς
Εὐδαλμονος καλουμένης Ἀραβίας⁶.

Here ἐπὶ θάλασσαν must mean 'to the Mediterranean', and so it seems likely that by the early third century BC, and probably before that, the Nabataeans were already bringing spices to Gaza for distribution throughout the Mediterranean world.

The prosperity of Gaza and its importance as a trading centre in the Ptolemaic period are attested by papyrological and numismatic evidence. Of particular importance is one of the Zenon papyri, which refers to a 'supervisor of the perfumes' at Gaza, a phrase which points to Ptolemaic governmental control over the trade.⁸ The abundant coins minted at Gaza in the Persian and Ptolemaic periods are evidence for the prosperity of the city at that time.⁹

But there is a marked decline in coins from Gaza after the Seleucid conquest of Palestine by Antiochus III in 200 BC, which can be explained by a rapid deterioration of the city's economic position. It appears that the Ptolemies were anxious to keep control over the spice trade firmly in their own hands, and to ensure that it went to Alexandria, rather than to Gaza or any other port under Seleucid rule. It is also possible that it was at this time that they learned to exploit the monsoon winds for direct trade between India and the Red Sea ports of Egypt, thus bypassing Nabataea altogether. This may be what lies behind the reports of Diodorus and Strabo that the

Nabataeans turned to piracy, attacking Egyptian shipping on the Red Sea, until a Ptolemaic fleet was dispatched to put an end to their inroads.¹⁰ The Seleucids, too, were concerned to promote trade with their cities in northern Syria, and Strabo reports that at least part of the Nabataean caravan trade was conducted through Damascus.^{10a} Gaza, therefore, sank into obscurity.

Its fortunes seem to have revived, however, in the second half of the second century BC, when, for the first time, it issued its own autonomous Seleucid coinage.¹¹ Apparently, at that time the Nabataeans had gained sufficient strength to defy both the disintegrating Seleucid empire to the north and the Ptolemies to the south, and to conduct their trade independently of either.¹² But this revival of Gaza's prosperity was quickly brought to an end by the destruction of the city at the hands of Alexander Jannaeus in around 96 BC.¹³ It is worth noting that at the time of the siege the Gazaeans were relying on the Nabataean king, Aretas II, to come to their aid. The city fell through treachery, however, before he arrived.¹⁴

During the years that Gaza lay in ruins, until its rebuilding by Gabinius, the Nabataeans had to find alternative outlets for their trade. There are sources from the early Roman period which suggest possibilities for these alternatives. The first is Strabo, who, as part of his account of the expedition of Aelius Gallus in 26/5 BC,¹⁵ states: *ἐκ μὲν οὖν τῆς Λευκῆς κώμης εἰς Πέτραν, ἐντεῦθεν δ' εἰς Ῥινοκόλουρα τῆς πρὸς Αἰγύπτῳ Φοινίκης τὰ φορτία κομίζεται, κἀντεῦθεν εἰς τοὺς ἄλλους· οὐκ δὲ τὸ πλεον εἰς τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν τῷ Νεῖλῳ· καταγεται δ' ἐκ τῆς Ἀραβίας καὶ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς εἰς Μυδὸν ὄρμον· εἴθ' ὑπέρθεσις εἰς Κόπτον τῆς Θηβαΐδος καμῆλοις ἐν διώρυγι τοῦ Νεῖλου κειμένην.* 16

The choice of Rhinocolura as a substitute port for Gaza seems highly plausible. It was equally easy of access to the Nabataeans by the roads across the Negev,¹⁷ and apparently had some sort of a port. Abel states: 'bien que située à deux kilomètres de la mer, cette ville (Rhinocolure) était susceptible d'avoir un certain commerce maritime'.¹⁸ Josephus records that it was conquered by Jannaeus, but not that he destroyed it,¹⁹ and it may be imagined that Jewish control over this border town became increasingly tenuous, particularly under Jannaeus' successors. The political status of Rhinocolura under the Romans is unclear. Was it immediately incorporated in the new province of Egypt in 31 BC, or left in the Nabataean kingdom of Arabia, which extended over the Negev and north Sinai?²⁰ In any case, the Romans exercised some control over trade in the client kingdom of Arabia and would presumably have imposed their customs duties at Rhinocolura, just as they did at the Red Sea Nabataean port of Leuke Kome.²¹

Gaza was rebuilt under Gabinius about 56 BC, but it is possible that the Nabataeans would not have been in a hurry to return to their traditional port, considering the turmoil in Judaea during the wars of the Hasmonaeans. Then the grant of Gaza to Herod by Octavian in 30 BC may have made them hesitate to risk allowing their trade to fall into the hands of that bitter enemy and ambitious rival of the Nabataean kingdom.²² Herod, was, of course, committed to developing trade through his own new port of Caesarea with its magnificent harbour,²³ but it seems unlikely that he would have

ignored the opportunity of exploiting the profits of the spice trade, if it had been open to him. There is, however, no evidence that he ever expressed any interest in Gaza whatsoever.²⁴

After describing how the spices are transferred (*κομίζεται*) from Petra to Rhinocolura, Strabo continues that now (*νυνὶ δέ*) they are mostly shipped directly to Egypt, being landed (*κατάγεται*) at Myos Hormus. In both cases the verb is in the present tense, but it is clear that they do not refer to the same time, and that, by inserting the remark on the sea route to Egypt, Strabo is bringing up to date the information he found in his source. That source appears to be an account of the expedition of Aelius Gallus. A little earlier Strabo had written:

Πολλὰ δὲ καὶ ἡ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἐπὶ τοῦς Ἀραβας στρατεία
νεωστὶ γενηθεῖσα ἐφ' ἡμῶν, ὧν ἡγεμῶν ἦν Αἴλιος Γάλλος,
διδάσκει τῶν τῆς χώρας ἰδιωμάτων²⁵.

So it appears that the information concerning Rhinocolura dates from around 26/5 BC, unless, of course, Strabo or Gallus was relying on an earlier source. The later information about the sea route must refer to the time at which Strabo was writing. The date of the composition of his *Geography* has been disputed, but it appears that the bulk of the work was probably completed by about 3/2 BC, although a few passages were inserted later.²⁶ In that case, we have evidence that in the last quarter of the first century BC attempts were made to divert the spice trade from the overland route, by transporting the merchandise by sea directly to the Red Sea coast of Egypt.

This implies increasing use of the monsoon winds, enabling direct sea traffic between Egypt and the Red Sea, and was no doubt the result of Augustus' expansionist foreign policy in the first part of his reign,²⁷ and his attempts to strengthen Roman control over the lucrative spice trade. The expedition of Aelius Gallus was, according to Strabo, motivated by Augustus' desire to subjugate the wealthy spice-trading kingdom of the Sabaeans in the south-west of the Arabian peninsula,²⁸ and the equally unsuccessful campaigns of C. Petronius in Ethiopia may have been prompted by similar considerations.²⁹ It is true that Strabo describes the Ethiopians as relatively primitive people, living in harsh conditions,³⁰ but to their south there lay the territory of the Trogodytes, who were actively involved in the spice trade,³¹ and the Romans may well have been hoping to penetrate further south and to seize control over this trade, since their attempt to do so on the other side of the Red Sea had been rebuffed. There is also evidence from Egypt for Augustus' attempts to improve facilities, to tighten supervision over ports and roads, and to levy customs and transit duties.³²

All this suggests that it was Roman policy to take the spice trade, as far as possible, into their own hands and to reduce their dependence on the Nabataeans. The reasons for this are not entirely clear. Nabataea had been a client state of Rome since Aretas I submitted to Aemilius Scaurus in 59 BC,³³ and the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* speaks of Roman customs duties being levied at the Nabataean port of Leuke Kome and of a garrison under the command of a centurion stationed in the town for security reasons.³⁴ The Nabataean traders were, then, under Roman control. Possibly the sea route was quicker, though the Red Sea, particularly in its northern reaches, is treacherous for shipping, and its winds are unreliable.³⁵ Perhaps also, if the Nabataeans were still using Rhinocolura as their main outlet to the Mediterranean, that small port may have proved incapable of handling large

quantities of merchandise, resulting in difficulties and delays in loading ships there.

But, whatever the reasons that encouraged the Romans to expand the sea trade with India, it clearly did not supersede the traditional caravan traffic altogether, and there is direct evidence from the very end of the first century BC that by that time Gaza was once again considered the final station on at least one of the main spice routes from Arabia. This evidence is contained in a passage of Pliny the Elder concerning the spice trade, which will be quoted in full and discussed in detail later.³⁶ Here the important sentence is:

caput eorum Thomna abest a Gaza nostri litoris in Iudaea oppido,
[XXIIII] · XXXVII D p., quod dividitur in mansionibus camelorum
LXV.

By establishing the distance, both in miles³⁷ and the number of days' journey for a camel train, from the South Arabian trading centre he calls Thomna to Gaza, Pliny makes it clear that he considers this the main route over which the spices were conveyed. Now Pliny's source for this information, as he himself tells us only a few sentences earlier, is Juba of Mauretania:

Juba rex iis voluminibus, quae scripsit ad C. Caesarem, Augusti
filium, ardentem fama Arabiae, tradit.....³⁸

Juba's essay on Arabia, as Pliny states, was composed on behalf of Gaius Caesar, the grandson of Augustus, who conducted a campaign against Arabia, which apparently reached no further than Nabataea, in the year AD 1.³⁹ If this treatise was intended to provide Gaius with useful information before embarking on his expedition, it must have been written a year or two earlier.

It appears, then, that by this date not only was at least part of the spice trade still conducted overland by the Nabataeans in the traditional way, but they had by then returned to using Gaza as the port to which they brought their merchandise. It is not possible to establish the date at which this change was made. Strabo's reference to Nabataean trade at Rhinocolura cannot be dated with certainty to the time of Aelius Gallus, and while it is tempting to associate the return to Gaza with the death of Herod in 4 BC and to conclude that immediately on the removal of their bitter enemy the Nabataeans took advantage of the opportunity to return to their traditional port, it has to be admitted that the time-scale is very short. Particularly when one considers the disturbances that took place in Judaea on the death of Herod and the length of time before Augustus divided the kingdom between Herod's sons and annexed Gaza, and other cities, to the province of Syria,⁴⁰ it is hard to see that there was time for the Nabataeans to decide on the return to Gaza and to put it into effect before Juba began to compose his treatise. Perhaps, then, it is safer to conclude that, despite the hostility between Herod and the Nabataeans, at least some of the spice trade passed through Gaza even before his death. Possibly Roman control over the trade and, perhaps, even the presence of Roman tax collectors in the port,⁴¹ was sufficient to deter Herod from interfering.

Yet another Roman writer from the first half of the first century AD gives a different version of the spice trade. Pomponius Mela writes:

Arabia hinc ad Rubrum mare pertinet, sed illic magis laeta et ditior ture atque odoribus abundat, hic nisi qua Cassio monte adtollitur plane et sterilis portum admittit Azotum suarum mercium emporium, qua in altum abito adeo edita ut ex summo vertice a quarta vigilia ortum solis ostendat.⁴²

The passage is clumsily expressed, but the sense is clear enough. Mela is claiming that Azotus was the Mediterranean port for the Arabian spice trade. This testimony is, however, not to be taken seriously. It is clearly confused in placing Azotus in 'Arabia', close to Mr. Cassius on the Sinai coast near Pelusium. Moreover, there is nothing to suggest that Mela was describing the conditions prevalent in his own period. He was dependent on earlier Greek sources, and this remark could have been written in the time of the Persian Empire.⁴³ Whether or not it was accurate at whatever time it dates from is irrelevant to the present discussion.

I shall now return to Pliny, who gives much useful information about Arabia in general and the spice trade in particular. His main sources, as he frequently states, are Aelius Gallus⁴⁴ and, as has already been seen, Juba of Mauretania.⁴⁵ In a number of passages Pliny refers to the trade in frankincense. The first of these establishes the ancient and prosperous kingdom of Saba in the south-west of the Arabian peninsula as the main incense-producing area:

Cetera explorata [Aelius Gallus] retulit Sabaeos ditissimos silvarum odifera, auri metallis, agrorum riguis, mellis ceraeque proventu.⁴⁶

The second passage identifies the 'Sabaeen district' of the Atramitae as the centre of incense production, and mentions its capital, Sabota:

tura praeter Arabiam nulla ac ne Arabiae quidem universae. in medio eius fere sunt Atramitae, pagus Sabaeorum, capite regni Sabota in monte excelso, a quo octo mansionibus distat regio eorum turifera Sariba appellata, hoc Graeci mysterium dicunt.⁴⁷

The Atramitae are referred to in other sources as the Chatramotitae, and are to be identified with the tribe of Hadramut of south-east Arabia.⁴⁸ The town Sabota is called Σάβατα by Strabo,⁴⁹ Σάββαθα by Ptolemy,⁵⁰ and Σαββαθα in the Periplus Maris Erythraei, which stresses its role as a trading centre.⁵¹ Its original name, as proved by inscriptions, was Shabwat, and it is now known as Shabwa.⁵²

The third passage, a brief portion of which was quoted above, deals with the transport of the incense from Sabota to Gaza:

tus collectum Sabotam camelis convehitur, porta ad id una patente. degredi via capital reges fecere. ibi decumanas deo, quem vocant Sabin, mensura, non pondere, sacerdotes capiunt, nec ante mercari licet: inde impensae publicae tolerantur; nam et benigne certo dierum numero deus hospites pascit. evehi non potest nisi per Gebbanitas, itaque et horum regi penditur vectigal. caput eorum Thomna abest a Gaza, nostri litoris in Iudaea oppido, [XXIIII] · [XXXVII] D p., quod dividitur in mansionibus camelorum LXV. Sunt et quae sacerdotibus dantur portiones scribisque regum certae. Sed praeter hos et custodes satellitesque et ostarrii et ministri populantur. iam quacumque

iter est aliubi pro aqua, aliubi pro pabulo aut pro mansionibus variisque portoriis pendunt, ut sumptus in singulos camelos * DCLXXXVIII ad nostrum litus colligat, iterumque imperii nostri publicanis penditur. Itaque optimi turis libra * XVI pretium habet, secundi * V, tertii * III.⁵³

Pliny clearly considers the true starting-point of the caravan route to Gaza to be Thomna, 'the capital of the Gebbanitae'. It is generally accepted that Thomna must be identified with the modern Timna, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Qataban, referred to by Strabo as *Τάμνα* and by Ptolemy as *Θοόμνα*⁵⁴, but the identity of the Gebbanitae and their relationship with the Qatabanians is less certain.⁵⁵ Moreover, this information, derived from Juba,⁵⁶ was already becoming out-of-date in Pliny's time, as archaeological excavations have shown that the city was destroyed, or at least stopped trading with the Roman world, by the middle of the first century AD.⁵⁷

But, whatever the details of the route and from whichever city the caravans set out, Pliny's general description no doubt remained valid: the various taxes and tithes paid to kings and priests through whose territory they passed, and the heavy expenses incurred by the merchants on the journey. A survey of one stretch of the road from Petra to Gaza has shown that it was well equipped with facilities for travellers: caravanserais, water cisterns and guardposts.⁵⁸ Pliny's words suggest that similar provision must have been made along the entire route. He also states that Roman customs duty was levied on the incense for the first time when it reached the Mediterranean coast, which means at Gaza. The level of this tax is not mentioned, but it is reasonable to assume that it was the same as the 25% levied at Leuke Kome,⁵⁹ which appears to have been imposed on all merchandise entering the Roman Empire along the entire eastern frontier.⁶⁰

These passages describe the traffic in frankincense, but that was not the only spice exported from southern Arabia. One of the most important of the others was myrrh, which was produced in the same areas as frankincense and was also imported by the Sabaeans from East Africa.⁶¹ Other spices considered by some sources to be native to Arabia and by others to be imported from Africa and re-exported along the caravan route were cassia and cinnamon.⁶² Pliny also mentions as imports from Arabia cardamon⁶³ and ladanum,⁶⁴ and Strabo adds nard, which Pliny attributes mainly to India.⁶⁵ (Gaza may also have been one of the ports through which was exported a locally grown spice, the much-prized balsam from the groves of Jericho.⁶⁶)

It is nowhere specifically stated that the caravan route from Arabia to Gaza passed through Petra, but this may be assumed., Pliny carefully records the distance from Petra to Gaza:

abest a Gaza oppido litoris nostri DC, a sinu Persico CXXV.
huc convenit utrumque bivium, eorum qui ex Syriam Palmyram
petiere et eorum qui a Gaza venerunt.⁶⁷

Strabo reports that spices were brought to Petra, though he describes them as being transported to Leuke Kome by sea and thence overland.⁶⁸ The Periplus Maris Erythraei also mentions the road between Leuke Kome and Petra.⁶⁹ Moreover, Petra stood at the centre of a complex web of trade routes. From there it was possible to travel not only to Gaza or Rhinocolura, but also to Damascus, Palmyra and the Persian Gulf, as Pliny states in the passage quoted above.⁷⁰ The people of Petra traded with the

town of Charax Spasinou at the head of the Persian Gulf,⁷¹ an important centre for trade with Persia, India and the Far East.⁷² Yet another caravan route linked Petra with Gerrha, a wealthy city on the Persian Gulf coast of Arabia.⁷³ Along these routes there came to Petra spices from Arabia, East Africa and India, pearls and other precious stones, Indian cotton, Chinese silk, and other valuable and exotic goods. From Petra the merchandise was dispatched in different directions, some north to Philadelphia, Damascus and the north Syrian ports, some west across the Negev to Gaza, where it was loaded onto ships for dispersal throughout the Mediterranean.

But not all the merchandise shipped from Gaza had arrived there from Petra. There was also trade between Gaza and Aila on the Gulf of Aqaba. From early times a road ran across the Negev from Aila, meeting the coastal highway between Gaza and Rhinocolura,⁷⁴ and both Strabo⁷⁵ and Pliny⁷⁶ record the distance between the two towns. The approach to Aila by sea was difficult and dangerous,⁷⁷ but the Nabataean caravan route from Leuke Kome to Petra passed through it.⁷⁸ Aila also lay at the southern end of the ancient King's Highway, running north to Philadelphia and Bostra and ultimately, to Damascus, which later became the Via Nova Traiana.⁷⁹ The fact that Aila continued to be of importance into the later Roman and Byzantine periods is seen in the fact that it became a legionary base, when the Legio X Fretensis moved there from Jerusalem, possibly under Diocletian.⁸⁰

There is also the question of the decline of the Nabataean spice trade, and the date at which their caravans stopped crossing the desert to Gaza. This is sometimes put very early. It used to be believed that the Petra-Gaza road fell into disuse by the end of the first century AD,⁸¹ and it is argued that the increasing sedentarisation of the Nabataeans and their development of agriculture was the result of the decline of the caravan trade, which forced them to find an alternative source of livelihood and to adopt a more settled way of life.⁸² But recent archaeological investigations have shown that the Petra-Gaza road was still fortified and in use in the third century and possibly into the fourth. In fact, at one way-station investigated, a watch-tower had been built by the Romans, replacing an earlier Nabataean building.⁸³ It is, therefore, unnecessary to argue that the spice trade came to an end immediately after the Roman annexation of Nabataea in 106.

There is, however, no reference to that trade in the copious Byzantine sources on Gaza, and it is apparent that by that time it no longer played an important part in the economy of the city. It is also clear that Petra declined in importance in the centuries following the annexation. It was apparently still a prosperous and cultured city in the third century, but had already lost its political status as the capital of Nabataea to Bostra, the capital of Provincia Arabia.⁸⁴ Petra seems to have been severely damaged in an earthquake in the mid-fourth century,⁸⁵ and apparently never recovered, but sank into obscurity and was eventually abandoned.⁸⁶ Such factors as the sacking or destruction of many great commercial cities, the rise of the Sassanid dynasty in Persia, and the withdrawal northward of the Roman frontier in Egypt have been cited as indications, or contributory causes of that decline.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, it appears that trade between Arabia and Gaza did not cease altogether. Timotheus of Gaza reports in the late fifth century that a trader in Indian goods, a native of Aila, passed through Gaza, bringing

two giraffes and an elephant to be presented to the Emperor Anastasius.⁸⁸ There is also a report that Arab merchants from Mecca visited and even settled in Gaza before the Moslem conquest of the early seventh century, presumably travelling by way of Aila.⁸⁹

B: THE WINE TRADE.

In the Byzantine period, the place of the Arabian spice trade in the economy of Gaza was taken by trade in wine. Gaza no longer served as an intermediary station, to which merchandise was brought from great distances, to be put on board ship for re-export, but as a centre from which local produce was exported to the rest of the Mediterranean world, and beyond. At this time southern Palestine was at the height of its prosperity, and agriculture was flourishing. As a result of the sophisticated water conservation and irrigation techniques developed by the Nabataeans, parts of the Negev desert were now brought under cultivation for the first time.⁹⁰ Prominent among the crops grown in the Negev were grapes for wine-making. The excavations of three Nabataean towns in the Negev, Eboda, Elusa and Subeita, has revealed a number of elaborate wine presses, pointing to wine production on an industrial scale.⁹¹ This wine was conveyed to Gaza for export, and gradually acquired an international reputation for its high quality.

It is not possible to say precisely when the export of wine from Gaza began, though significantly it is not mentioned by Pliny, in his long discussion of various types of wine. By the middle of the fourth century, however, the Totius Orbis Descriptio states:

Similiter aliae civitates Ascalon et Gaza in negotiis eminentes et abundantes omnibus bonis mittunt omni regioni Syriae et Aegypti vinum bonum.⁹²

At about the same time, according to Jerome, the monks visited by Hilarion were occupied in cultivating vines in the fields around their desert monasteries,⁹³ and at the end of the fourth century Marcus Diaconus refers to the colony of Egyptian wine merchants residing in Gaza's port town, Maioumas.⁹⁴ Possibly the fact that both Marcus and the Totius Orbis Descriptio mention Egypt suggests that at this stage Gaza's wine trade was restricted to its neighbouring provinces in the eastern Mediterranean. But in the following centuries the fame of the city's wine spread, and references to it are found in a number of writers of the Latin West.

In the fifth century Sidonius Apollinaris writes:

vina mihi non sunt Gazetica, Chia, Falerna,
quaeque Sarepteno missa bibas.⁹⁵

At the beginning of the sixth century, Cassiodorus, while extolling the virtues of vinum Palmatianum, remarks:

id enim reperitur et Gazeto par, et Sabino simile, et magnis
odoribus singulare.⁹⁶

Also in the sixth century Corippus refers to:
dulcia Bacchi munera quae Sarepta
ferax, quae Gaza crearet,⁹⁷

and Gregory of Tours refers to the strength of Gaza wine:

... misitque pueros, unum post alium, ad requirenda potentiora
vina, Laticina videlicet, atque Gazitina.⁹⁸

In the second half of the sixth century Venantius Fortunatus also lists Gaza wine among others of high quality:

..... Falerna,
Gazaque, Creta, Samus, Cypros, Colofona, Seraptis,
lucida perspicuis certantia vina lapillis
vix discernendis crystallina pocula potis.^{98a}

Finally, in the early seventh century, before Gaza fell to the Moslems, when the wine industry presumably declined, Isodore of Seville writes:

Gazeum vinum vero regio, unde defertur. Gaza enim oppidum est
Palestinae.⁹⁹

In a recent article P. Mayerson has suggested that Gaza wine was popularised in the West by the pilgrims from France, Italy and Spain, who visited the Holy Land in ever-increasing numbers in the Byzantine period. Having enjoyed the wine during their stay in the country, they created a demand for it after their return home. Mayerson further suggests that the wine could have been transported in the same ships in which the pilgrims travelled.^{99a}

There is also archaeological evidence for the extent of Gaza's wine trade with the West. J.A. Riley has identified a certain type of amphora found in excavations in the hippodrome of Caesarea with that used to transport Gaza wine.¹⁰⁰ This identification rests largely upon petrological analysis of this pottery and comparison with modern pottery from Gaza, made from local clay by traditional methods, which showed a close similarity between the two wares. Riley notes the wide distribution of pottery of the type found at Caesarea: in Palestine itself it is found mainly in the south of the country, at Ashdod and at Gaza itself; small quantities have been found at Istanbul, and some in Egypt; several examples have been found in Spain, dated to the fourth to sixth centuries, and others have been recorded in England, mainly in London; further finds have been reported from Trier, Rumania and Crimea.¹⁰¹

These amphorae no doubt formed the bulk of the pottery referred to by Stephanus of Byzantium as κέραμοι Γαζῖται.¹⁰² One of the Nessana papyri also refers to a γαζ(τιλον), as an all-purpose jar for the storage and transport of such food-stuffs as salted fish, honey-cakes and wheat meal.¹⁰³ The amphora described by Riley, with its low and relatively wide neck, would be equally suitable for dry foods and liquids.¹⁰⁴

C: TRADE IN OTHER AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE.

The papyrus cited above makes it clear that wine was not the only agricultural product transported and traded through Gaza. The Nessana papyri give information on the variety of crops grown there, including wheat, barley, grapes, olives, figs and dates.¹⁰⁶ No doubt the bulk of the crops were intended for local consumption, and we have no evidence for the sale of cereals, olives, or grapes, though the series of entagia,

requisitions of wheat and oil by the Arab governor in the late seventh century, shows that a surplus of these crops over the needs of the local population was produced.¹⁰⁶ But they may well have been subject to levies by the Byzantine government as well, so one cannot be certain that they were available for sale.

On the other hand, trade in dates is well documented by two papyri recording daily sales, listing the quantities involved and the names of the purchasers.¹⁰⁷ These records show that the dates were sold either "clean" or "dirty", which Kraemer interprets as either "pitted" or "with the stones",¹⁰⁸ and packed in baskets, four baskets making one donkey load. While some of the traders clearly owned large caravans of donkeys, other had the use of only one or two. On occasions a purchaser who normally bought only small quantities of dates had evidently hired additional animals, to enable him to transport a large load. The fact that frequently the amounts purchased do not make up complete donkey loads indicates that the traders may also have acquired other merchandise along their route.¹⁰⁹ The names of traders are typically Egyptian, as is the calendar by which the records are dated, suggesting that Egyptians held a monopoly of the trade in the area. But some of the intervals at which the same names appear as purchasers are too short for them to have been able to make the long journey into Egypt and to return to Nessana. So it appears that most of these people were engaged in short-haul trading, between Nessana and the other Negev towns, or into Gaza, whence the dates could be dispatched to Egypt or elsewhere by sea.¹¹⁰

Although we have no direct evidence for other commodities, it is reasonable to assume that they were traded in the same way, and that the surplus agricultural produce of Nessana was conveyed into Gaza, on donkey-back, or by camel train.¹¹¹ The trade would not have been in one direction only, and many of the products used by the people of Nessana must have been brought in from Gaza. One papyrus fragment contains a list of foodstuffs, honey, garum (fish sauce), almonds and other nuts, which Kraemer suggests were imported from Gaza.¹¹² The excavations at Nessana revealed large quantities of edible shellfish and fishbones, the majority of which were of species native to the Red Sea, which must have been transported from Aila. Other species, however, came from the Mediterranean, and two fresh-water molluscs from the Nile. They presumably reached Gaza by sea and were then conveyed to Nessana by donkey train, perhaps packed in baskets together with wet seaweed. The difficulty of preserving the shellfish in an edible condition on a lengthy journey, of at least two days from Gaza and even more from Aila, suggests that this trade may have been restricted to the cooler winter months.¹¹³

From the Nessana papyri, therefore, it is possible to obtain a picture of the trade between Gaza and one small town in its hinterland. The picture is, of course, partial, and the trade obviously included far more products of various types than can be demonstrated from the available evidence. But it does give a general impression of that trade and of how it was conducted. And Nessana was only one of the settlements that must have had commercial relations with Gaza. It is reasonable to assume that the other Negev towns, Eboda, Mampsis, Elusa and Subeita, traded their produce in the same way, though there is no direct evidence for this trade, apart from the wine presses mentioned above.¹¹⁴ The villages surrounding Gaza on the coastal plain must also have sent their produce to the city, both for export and to supply the daily needs of its large urban population, and they too would have been supplied from the city with those goods which

could not be produced locally.^{114a}

D: OTHER INDUSTRIES AT GAZA.

We know little of the industries of Gaza. The full range of occupations necessary for the maintenance of a prosperous city and its inhabitants must have been practised there, but we have little evidence for them. From what has been said above, it is apparent that a large section of the population must have been engaged in trade in one form or another. Pottery must also have been an important industry, producing large quantities of amphorae for the transport of Gaza's wine and other exports, and no doubt domestic wares for the local market as well. The excavations on the coast at Gaza have revealed further aspects of the industrial life of the city and its port. Apart from the synagogue discovered there, a well-preserved dye-works was found, dating from the early to middle fifth century AD. Numerous sherds found on its floors were stained reddish-brown or violet dyes, which chemical analysis showed to be inorganic. Some derived from the Negev and Sinai, but others had been imported from Italy and Greece.¹¹⁵ No doubt textiles were produced as well as dyed at Gaza, but whether for export, or purely for the local market it is impossible to say.

The synagogue itself also provides a little information about other occupations practised at Gaza. The mosaic pavement in the southern aisle of the building contains an inscription commemorating the donors, Menachem and Jeshua, and describing them as wood merchants.¹¹⁶ The men who could afford to donate these splendid mosaics were clearly prosperous. Timber was, of course, in short supply in the arid southern regions, and must have been imported in large quantities for use in building.¹¹⁷

The mosaic itself, with a design of birds and animals enclosed in medallions formed from vine stems, bears a remarkable resemblance to a number of other mosaic pavements from synagogues and churches throughout the south of Palestine, and even as far as Jerusalem, all of similar dates in the sixth century. This has led to the conclusion that there was in Gaza at that time a workshop for mosaic design and construction which gained a high reputation for the beauty of its work and received numerous commissions for the decoration of sacred buildings far from Gaza itself.¹¹⁸ No doubt this workshop was also responsible for the magnificent mosaics of the Church of St. Sergius in Gaza, described by Choricius, which, unfortunately, have not survived. It is noteworthy that the designs mentioned by Choricius include vines with clusters of grapes, various birds, and a vase of water.¹¹⁹

Yet another factor contributing to the prosperity of Gaza in the Byzantine period was the pilgrim traffic. As Christianity spread throughout the Roman world, interest in the 'Holy Land' grew, and increasing numbers of travellers came to visit its sacred places. Many were wealthy, and lavishly endowed churches and monasteries. Others were less prosperous, but even they spent money on food and lodgings, bought relics and paid guides to conduct them round the sacred sites.¹²⁰ All this brought increased revenues to the towns of Palestine, and Gaza was among those that profited.

It was not, of course, until paganism had been suppressed in Gaza and the Christian Church was firmly in control, that pilgrims would be welcomed in the city, or would themselves be anxious to visit it.¹²¹ It is

significant that in two of the earliest accounts we have of pilgrim journeys to Palestine, those of Paula and Egeria (or Aetheria), both of the late fourth century,¹²² Gaza is scarcely mentioned. Paula is reported as having travelled down the ancient road from Jerusalem to Gaza. But she soon turned off it in the direction of Beth Zur, and went on to Hebron.¹²³ On another occasion, she returned by sea from a visit to Egypt and disembarked at Maioumas. But there is no reference to her taking the opportunity to visit Gaza and its shrines before returning to Bethlehem, where she decided to settle.¹²⁴

Egeria does not mention Gaza at all, although she must have passed through the city. Unfortunately, the first pages of her narrative are missing, and the extant part begins with her visit to Mt. Sinai. But it appears from several of her remarks concerning her return journey that she travelled from Jerusalem down the coast road to Pelusium, and then through Clysma and Pharan to the monastery, and returned the same way.¹²⁵ She must, therefore, have passed through Gaza on both journeys. We cannot tell what comments she may have made on the city in the lost part of her book, but certainly, in the brief account of her journey from the Egyptian border, she does not express any desire to linger in the area:

Et inde in nomine Christi Dei nostri faciens denuo mansiones
aliquod per Palestina regressa sum in Helia, id est in
Ierusalimam.¹²⁶

But once Christianity was officially established in Gaza and the pagan temples were destroyed, an immediate concern of the Christian community was to encourage pilgrims, and a hostel for travellers was included in the plans for the magnificent new church built on the orders of, and with the funds provided by, the Empress Eudoxia. It is not specifically stated that the hostel was in fact built, but when the church was finished, the bishop ordered that each visitor should be paid a day's expenses, presumably from Church funds, as his own personal charities are listed separately.¹²⁷ The celebrations that accompanied the consecration of the church attracted a large number of pilgrims to Gaza, no doubt the first time so many Christians had gathered there, and from then on the city became increasingly popular with them.¹²⁸

Gaza had no biblical holy places to attract pilgrims. It was, of course, the scene of the death of Samson, but that story seems to have had little appeal to the early Christians, who were more interested in Philip's baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch on the road to Gaza.¹²⁹ The city was however, the site of a number of martyria, shrines to Christian martyrs who suffered in the persecutions. These included the shrines of Timotheus, Major and Thecla in Gaza itself,¹³⁰ and that of St. Victor, between Gaza and Maioumas. Nothing is known of his story, but the church was clearly an important one, marked on the Madeba Map,¹³¹ and mentioned by Antoninus Placentinus,¹³² who also comments on the fact that the tomb of Hilarion, in the ruins of his monastery, lay at a distance of two miles from Gaza.¹³³ These shrines served, therefore, to attract visitors to the city, as well as those who merely passed through on their way to or from Egypt.

The city also served occasionally as a starting-point for journeys through the Negev and down to Mt. Sinai. Antoninus relates how he travelled from Gaza to Elusa and then through the desert to a fort twenty miles away, where there was a pilgrim hostel, probably Nessana. From there he travelled on camel-back into the 'inner desert' and on into

Sinai.¹³⁴ But there is no evidence to suggest that this ever became a popular route, well frequented by pilgrims or traders. Antoninus tells us that it was safe for his party to travel this way only because the desert nomads were celebrating a festival, during which it was forbidden to attack travellers. After his visit to Mt. Sinai, the festival was over and he had to return to Jerusalem by way of Egypt.¹³⁵

Whether the pilgrims came to Gaza to visit its churches and martyria and to attend its splendid festivals,¹³⁶ or merely passed through on the coastal highway, they evidently appreciated the facilities offered by the city and the warmth with which they were welcomed by its inhabitants. Antoninus writes enthusiastically:

Gaza autem civitas splendida, deliciosa, homines honestissimi, omni liberalitate decori, amatores peregrinorum.¹³⁷

Choricus also writes of the visitors to Gaza and of how, attracted by the pleasantness of the city, they would often stay for longer than they had intended.¹³⁸ Pilgrims were not, however, the only visitors. The rhetorical school attracted a large number of students from all over the Byzantine world, and, like all university towns, Gaza must have profited from providing services for these young men, many of them, no doubt, supplied with generous allowances by their wealthy parents.

E: POPULATION.

The population of Gaza was a mixed one, reflecting the various waves of conquest that had washed over the city. By the Hellenistic period the Philistines of biblical times had long ago lost their separate identity and merged into the local Canaanite population. Alexander's conquest of Gaza did not lead to the introduction of Macedonian or Greek settlers. When he had taken the city and massacred its inhabitants, he ordered it to be repopulated by people from the surrounding villages, no doubt of basically mixed Canaanite-Philistine descent.¹³⁹ (The Phoenicians, who colonised much of the coast of Palestine, did not reach as far south as Gaza¹⁴⁰). There was also strong Arab influence in Gaza at the time of Alexander's attack on the town. It was garrisoned by Arab troops under a Persian commander,¹⁴⁴ and it is possible that there were Arab elements among the inhabitants of the city. The precise identity of the Arab tribes associated with Gaza at this time has been disputed, but it is now generally believed that those with the closest connections with the city were the Kedarites, who controlled the coastal area to the south.¹⁴² It was only in the years that followed that the Nabataeans replaced them as the most powerful and influential Arabs in the area and developed their close links with Gaza.

During the years of Ptolemaic and Seleucid rule, Gaza gradually became Hellenized, a process that must have involved the settlement of some Greeks, or at least Greek-speakers, in the city, and the development of an elite, educated in the Greek cultural tradition and speaking the language. But there exist two pieces of evidence that Aramaic was and remained the everyday language of the majority of the people of Gaza and the surrounding area. Both come from Byzantine sources and, unfortunately, both have miraculous elements and cannot be accepted in all their details. But the situation implied as the background to these stories seems probable.

The first source is Jerome's Life of Hilarion. He narrates an incident in which Hilarion addresses in Aramaic a Frankish imperial officer, who is miraculously enabled to answer in that language, despite knowing only Latin and Frankish.¹⁴³ Hilarion, of course, could speak Greek perfectly well; in the same story he is reported as having repeated his questions in Greek for the benefit of the officer's companions, and he had studied under a grammaticus in Alexandria.¹⁴⁴ It may be asked why he should choose to address an obvious foreigner (Jerome comments on his fair skin and red hair) in Aramaic. Perhaps he had decided to adopt it as his everyday speech as part of his rejection of his wealthy pagan background, and to bring him closer to the simple country people, among whom he apparently had more success in attracting converts than among the sophisticated people of the cities.¹⁴⁵

The second source is Marcus Diaconus. He reports that, during a discussion among the Christians as to what should be done with the Marneion, a child, apparently seized by divine inspiration, called out that the temple should be burnt. This outburst is said to have been in Aramaic. Later, while being questioned by the bishop, he repeated his instructions in Greek, although his mother insisted that neither she nor her son knew that language.¹⁴⁶ Whatever the truth of this anecdote, it clearly implies that Aramaic was the normal language of the Christians of Gaza.¹⁴⁷

The fact that both these sources are from the Byzantine period, when Greek culture in Gaza was close to its height, although the city's rhetorical school had not yet achieved the reputation it was to acquire a hundred years or so later, indicates that this situation was not new and that, throughout Gaza's history as part of the Hellenistic-Roman world, Aramaic had always been the language of the common people, and that the Greek language and its culture had affected only the aristocracy of that city, those with the money to send their sons to the gymnasium to acquire that much-valued education.

Gaza had never been a Jewish town, and we have no evidence for Jews' having lived there in the Hellenistic or early Roman period. But a few historical and Talmudic sources hint at, and archaeological findings confirm, the later existence of a Jewish community, which by the sixth century had become well-established and prosperous. The earliest reference to the presence of Jews in Gaza is the rather garbled information in the Chronicon Paschale that after the Bar Kokhba revolt Jewish prisoners were sold in the slave market associated with the fair at Gaza.¹⁴⁸ This does not, however, imply that these Jews were necessarily natives of the area before the revolt.

There are occasional Talmudic references to Gaza, some of which provide a little information. A late Mishanic source¹⁴⁹ reports a story of R. Eleazar, the son of R. Simeon ben Yochai, a Palestinian rabbi of the late second century AD, saying "A place was on the border of Gaza and they called it a Quarantined Ruin".¹⁵⁰ The context is that of houses polluted according to Levit. 14. 33f. This sort of pollution applies only within the Land of Israel,¹⁵¹ and the other example given in the same section of the Tosefta by a contemporary and fellow-student of R. Eleazar is in Galilee. The implication is that at the end of the second century AD Gaza was considered to be within the Land of Israel, and there were Jews there who would care about such pollution.

The πανηγυρις of Gaza is mentioned in a tradition going back to R.

Hanina ben Hama (died c. 280 AD). It is interesting that the same answer by R. Hanina is given in the Jerusalem Talmud with the Hebrew translation עליוט 152 (i.e. $\alpha\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha$. Presumably, no taxes were levied on sales made at this fair.).¹⁵³

Schwartz¹⁵⁴ interprets a passage in the Jerusalem Talmud¹⁵⁵ to mean that R. Aha (fourth century AD Palestinian rabbi) permitted Jews to reside in Gaza. But the context makes it clear that all that he permitted was to eat the fruits of Gaza, although it is part of the land of the Gentiles, which is not included in the Land of Israel (טומאת ארץ העמים). But this is only the final context in the Jerusalem Talmud itself. Since we have seen that in the second century there was a tradition which regarded Gaza as part of the Land of Israel, from the point of view of house pollution, it is conceivable that R. Aha's reason for allowing Jews to eat from the fruits of Gaza was that he considered it part of the Land of Israel also from the point of view of the pollution of the Land of the Gentiles, and exempted its fruits from this pollution.

This should be confirmed by another fourth century tradition¹⁵⁶ that R. Yitzak bar Nahman lived in Gaza, but was appointed elder (judge in a rabbinical court) on condition that he returned to the Land of Israel. The implication is that Gaza was considered outside the country (חוץ לארץ), as the Talmudic context shows, from the point of view of rabbinical courts, but that it was not considered entirely outside the Land of Israel, especially from the point of view of purity and impurity.¹⁵⁷ What it also shows is that there must have been a Jewish community in Gaza at the time, since it is inconceivable that a Talmudic rabbi, who was appointed an elder, would be living alone in a gentile town.

Taken together, therefore, these passages suggest that there may have been a Jewish community, though probably only a small one, in Gaza possibly from the second century, and probably by the fourth.

There are also a few Christian references to Jews at Gaza. The words of Ambrose of Milan:

at certe si iure gentium agerem, dicerem quantas ecclesias
basilicas Iudaei tempore Iuliana incenderint. Duas
Damasci... incensae sunt basilicae Gazis, Ascalone,
Beryto... et vindictam nemo quaesivit.¹⁵⁸

have been taken as evidence for the presence of Jews in Gaza and their links with the Jewish community in Ascalon.¹⁵⁹ But Ambrose's remarks may be tendentious. Certainly, the pagans of Gaza needed no lessons from the Jews in hostility to Christians, and Sozomen does not mention Jewish involvement in the attacks on Christians in the city under Julian.¹⁶⁰

A final reference to Jews in Gaza in the Byzantine period comes from the *Vita S. Iohannis Eleemosynarii* of the seventh century. An unnamed monk describes how he was met at the gate of Gaza by a Jewish girl, who told him that she wished to become a Christian, and implored him to take her with him, which he eventually agreed to do, intending to place her in a convent.¹⁶¹ It is not specifically stated that this girl lived with her family in the city, but this is a natural assumption.

Apart from these few hints, the main evidence for a Jewish community in

Gaza comes from archaeological findings. Clermont-Ganneau commented on the column engraved with a menorah and a Hebrew inscription in the Great Mosque of Gaza, and argued that it must have come from a synagogue, though he believed that there was insufficient evidence for the presence of Jews in the city and suggested that the column had been brought there possibly from Alexandria, or Caesarea.¹⁶² A small fragment of a synagogue chancel screen, with a few Greek letters on one side and a menorah, shofar and lulav on the other, was also found near Gaza.¹⁶³

But it was only the discovery of the mosaic pavement on the seashore close to Gaza that established beyond any doubt the existence of a synagogue at Gaza and provided evidence for the size and prosperity of the community it served.¹⁶⁴ It measured approximately 26 x 30 m., thus being almost square, and in this unusual among Palestinian synagogues of the period. It was divided into five halls, a wide central nave with two narrower aisles on each side, by four rows of columns. On the east side was an apse 3 m. deep, used for the Ark of the Law. On the west side there were probably three entrances, leading to the nave and two inner aisles. There was an additional entrance in the south wall. The nave and aisles were originally paved with mosaics, which were later covered by large marble slabs, few of which survive. The mosaic described above¹⁶⁵ is in the southernmost aisle. Another preserved section is in the central panel, on its western side. This depicts King David as Orpheus playing his lyre to a number of animals. The Hebrew inscription דָּוִד makes this identification certain.¹⁶⁶ Other finds in the synagogue include fragments of four marble chancel screens, two of which are similar in design to the fine medallions in the mosaic pavement, and two large marble basins, one bearing a dedicatory inscription in Greek.¹⁶⁷

The completion of the building of the synagogue is dated by the mosaic inscription to 508/9 AD.¹⁶⁸ It should be noted that the synagogue was built over the ruins of private houses, or industrial buildings. It did not replace an earlier synagogue. This may indicate that the Jewish community of Maioumas was becoming more prosperous and possibly also increasing in size in the late fifth century. Certainly, the scale of the building and its elaborate decoration indicate a community of some wealth. Pottery lamps found in the synagogue are of types dated to the late sixth and early seventh centuries, continuing into the early Arab period. It appears, therefore, that the synagogue was probably destroyed shortly after the Moslem conquest.

This synagogue establishes the presence of a Jewish community in the port town Maioumas, the members of which presumably were engaged in trade, like the wood merchants, Menachem and Yeshua, who donated the mosaics to the synagogue. But there is still no evidence that Jews actually settled in the city of Gaza itself.

There was also a Samaritan community in Gaza. It is suggested that the Samaritans began to settle in the large pagan cities in the period following the crushing of the Bar Kokhbah revolt,¹⁶⁹ and it is possible that they reached Gaza at this time, but the first evidence for their presence there comes from the fourth century AD. From then on Gaza is occasionally mentioned by Samaritan chroniclers.¹⁷⁰ The historian Abu'l Fath reports that in 634 the Samaritans of Maioumas, like those of the other coastal towns, fled to the east, perhaps to Damascus, to escape the invading Arabs, having deposited their property with the High Priest, and never returned. (In fact, however, the Samaritan community of Gaza continued to thrive under

Moslem rule).¹⁷¹

Further evidence for Samaritan, and Jewish, communities in villages around Gaza is to be found in a Syriac chronicle for the year 634, which reports a battle between the Byzantines and Moslems, in which four thousand poor villagers, Christians, Jews and Samaritans, were killed.¹⁷² The phraseology suggests that these were local people, attempting to defend their own lands and property, rather than professional soldiers.

Yet other elements in the mixed population of Gaza were the communities of foreign merchants resident in Maioumas. Marcus Diaconus speaks of Egyptian wine merchants there,¹⁷³ and a large group of Arabs from Mecca settled in Gaza several years before the Moslem conquest.¹⁷⁴ No doubt there were other similar groups of which we have no trace.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4:

1. For evidence for the antiquity of the spice trade, see M. Raschke, 'New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East', ANRW IX, 655 and nn. 1113, 1114. See also Introduction, p. 3 above, nn. 26, 27 and the works cited there.
2. Arrian, Anab.Alex. II, 25,2; Curtius, Hist.Alex.Magn. IV, 6,7f.
3. Plut., Vit.Alex. 25, 4. Pliny's version of the story (N.H. XII, 14(32) 62) does not mention Gaza, saying merely:

at ille Arabiam potitus ture onustam navem misit....

4. Diod. XIX, 94, 1 - 100, 4.
5. Diod. XIX, 100, 1-2. The description of the Nabataeans: XIX, 94, 2-10. cf. II, 48, 1-9.
6. Diod. XIX, 94, 5.
7. Agatharchides, de Mari Erythraeo (Müller, Geog.Graec.Min. I, 176-179):

τὸ δὲ προσκελμενον ἀκροτήριον τῆς νήσου κεῖται κατὰ τὴν καλουμένην Πέτραν τῆς Ἀραβίας καὶ τὴν Παλαιστίνην· εἰς γὰρ ταύτην τὸν τε λίβανον καὶ τ' ἄλλα φορτὰ τὰ πρὸς εὐωδία ἀνήκοντα καταγουσιν, ὡς λόγος, ἐκ τῆς ἀνω λεγομένης Ἀραβίας οἱ τε Γερραῖοι καὶ Μιναῖοι.

Müller dates Agatharchides to c. 117-108 BC.

For the early history of the Nabataeans and their relations with Gaza, see also: J. Starcky, 'Pétra et la Nabatène', Dict. de la Bible, Suppl. VII, coll. 900-906; U. Rappaport, IEJ 20 (1970), 76; Schürer² I, 576-577; A. Negev, 'The Nabataeans and the Provincia Arabia', ANRW XIII, 520-531; Raschke, 660, n. 1254; G.W. Bowersock, JRS 61 (1971), 321-232; idem, Roman Arabia, 12-75.

8. P.Col.Zen., 2; Rappaport, 76-77; Schürer² II, 100; Kasher, Jerus. Cath. 2, 69-70.
9. BMCPal., lxxxiii-lxxxiv, 176-181; Rappaport, 76-77.
10. Diod. III, 43, 5; Strabo, XVI, 4.18 (777); Bowersock, Roman Arabia, 20-21.
- 10a. Strabo, XVI, 4, 22 (780); Rappaport, 77-78.
11. BMCPal., lxix-lxx, 143-144.
12. Rappaport, 78-79. See Bowersock, Roman Arabia, 22, on the importance of Nabataea in the late second century.

13. Jos. Ant. XIII, 13,3 (358); B.J. I, 4, 2 (87).
14. Jos. Ant. XIII, 13, 3 (360). Starcky, coll. 905-906, reports bronze coins found at Gaza and attributed to Aretas II. See also Bowersock, Roman Arabia, 22-23.
15. For this date and on the expedition in general, see S. Jameson, 'Chronology of the Campaigns of Aelius Gallus and C. Petronius', JRS 58 (1968), 71-84.
16. Strabo, XVI, 4,24 (781).
17. On the Negev roads, see Ch. 1, pp. 26-30 above, and the works cited there.
18. Abel, RB 49, (1940), 228.
19. Jos. Ant. XIII, 15,4 (395).
20. The sources on Rhinocolura are contradictory. Strabo places it in Phoenicia, which he extends as far as Pelusium (XVI, 2,21 (756)); loc.cit. n. 16 above. Pomponius Mela places one border of Arabia at Pelusium (I, 60). He does not identify the other, but refers to Gaza as in Palestine (I, 64). So it seems that he would have considered Rhinocolura, which he does not mention, to be Arabia. Pliny, however, includes it in Idumaea and Judaea, stating that the borders of Arabia were at Pelusium (N.H. V, 11 (12)65) and Ostracine (ibid. 12 (13)68). On the other hand, Ptolemy places it in Egypt, rather than in the Provincia Arabia (IV, 5,7), which does at least show that it had been part of Egypt before the annexation of Nabataean Arabia in 106. Negev believes that Rhinocolura was under Nabataean control in both the Hellenistic and his Middle and Later Nabataean periods, i.e. until the Roman annexation (ANRW VIII, 568; 534, Fig. 1; 558, Fig. 3 (maps showing the extent of the Nabataean kingdom).) There is, however, no evidence that the Nabataeans ever controlled the town.
21. Periplus Maris Erythraei 19 (Müller, Geog.Graec.Min. I, 272). See p. 88 below.
22. Hostile relations between Herod and the Nabataeans: 40 BC Malichus I refuses Herod sanctuary (Jos. Ant. XIV, 14, 1-2 (370-375); B.J. I, 14, 1-2, (274-278)); 32-31 BC, war between Herod and the Nabataeans (Jos. Ant. XV, 5, 1-5 (108-160); B.J. I, 19, 1-6 (167-175); c. 10-9 BC, second war between Herod and the Nabataeans (Jos. Ant. XVI, 9, 1-4 (271-299)).
23. On Caesarea see: Jos. Ant. XV, 9, 6 (331-341); B.J. I, 21, 5-8 (408-415).
24. A. Schalit, Hordus Hamelekh-Ha'ish ufo'olo, 173. Schalit suggests, without offering any evidence, that Herod rebuilt the port of Gaza, Kasher, Jerusalem Cathedra 2, 73, suggests that Herod rebuilt Anthedon (Jos. Ant. XIII, 13,3 (357); B.J. I, 4,2 (87); I, 21,8 (416)) as a counterbalance to Gaza, again without offering evidence.
25. Strabo XVI, 4,22 (780). For the close relationship between Aelius Gallus and Strabo, see G.W. Bowersock, Augustus and the Greek World (Oxford 1965), 128-129.

26. E. Honigmann, RE s.v. Strabon, coll. 83-85.
27. P.E. Brunt, JRS 53 (1963), 170-176, reviewing H.D. Meyer, Die Aussenpolitlk des Augustus und die Augusteische Dichtung (Cologne 1961).
28. Strabo XVI, 4,22 (780). Bowersock, JRS 61 (1971), 227; Roman Arabia, 46-47. Jameson, JRS 58 (1968), 79-82, and Raschke, 647, nn. 902, 903, minimize commercial factors as a motive for the expedition, but Strabo's testimony is quite clear. See also e.g. E.H. Warmington, The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India, 14-17; J.L. Miller, The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire, 13-15, 143, 194, 216-218, 224-225.
29. Strabo XVII, 1, 54 (820); Jameson, 74-76, 80-81.
30. Strabo XVII, 2, 1-3 (821-823).
31. Strabo XVII, 1,13 (798).
32. This evidence is collected by Warmington, 14, nn. 24-28.
33. Jos. Ant. XIV, 5,1 (80-81); Starcky, op.cit. n. 7 above, coll. 909-911; Schürer² I, 579.
34. Perip.Mar.Eryth. 19. This work is generally dated to AD 40-70 (the reign of the Nabataean king Malichus II). See S.J. de Laet, Portorium, 366-370; Raschke, 663-664, nn. 1342-1354. On the other hand, Bowersock, Roman Arabia 70-71, argues that the centurion at Leuke Kome was a Nabataean, not a Roman officer, citing the appearance of the term qntryn' in Nabataean inscriptions.
35. L. Casson, 'Rome's Trade with the East: the Sea Voyages to Africa and India', TAPA 110 (1980), 21-36, esp. 24, 28, 30; Raschke, nn. 966, 974, 975.
36. Pliny, NH XII, 14 (32), 63-65. See pp. 90-91 below.
37. These numbers are very corrupt in the MSS and cannot be considered reliable.
38. NH XII, 14(31), 56.
39. See Bowersock, JRS 61 (1971), 227; Roman Arabia, 57-58.
40. Jos. Ant. XVII, 9, 1-11, 5 (206-323); Schürer² II, 330-335.
41. See p. 91 below.
42. Mela I, 61. Mela's work is dated to AD 40/41 by C. Frick in the praefatio to his edition of the de Chorographia.
43. F. Gisinger, RE Suppl. IV, col. 674; M. Stern, Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism I (Jerusalem 1974), 370.
44. Pliny NH VI, 28(32), 160-161.

45. e.g. VI, 27(31), 141; XII 14(31), 56; XXXII, 1(4), 10.
46. VI, 28(32), 161. On Saba, see also Strabo XVI, 4,2 (768), which names the Sabaeen capital as Mariaba (the modern Marib); XVI, 4,19 (778). For a detailed examination of all the sources, see Tkač, RE s.v. Saba, coll. 1298-1515. See also, J. Pirenne, Le Royaume Sud-Arabe de Qataban et sa Datation, 106-117; H. von Wissmann, 'Die Geschichte des Sabäerreichs', ANRW IX, 396-398.
47. NH XII, 14(36), 52.
48. Strabo XVI, 4,2 (768). Pliny also refers to the Chatramotitae, apparently not realising that they and the Atramitae were the same people. NH VI, 28(32), 154; 161; Tkač, RE s.v. Saba, coll. 1448-1451.
49. Loc.cit. last note.
50. Ptol. VI, 7,38.
51. Perip.Mar.Eryth. 27 (Müller, Geog.Graec.Min. I, 277).
52. Tkač, RE s.v. Saba, coll. 1330-1331; Raschke, n. 1240.
53. NH XII, 14(32), 63-65.
54. Strabo XVI, 4,2 (768); Ptol. V, 7,37. See Tkač, RE s.v. Saba, coll. 1327-1338.
55. Tkač, s.v. Saba, coll. 1456-1459; idem, RE s.v. Gebbanitae, col. 893. Here Tkač identifies them with the Γαβαῖτοι of Strabo XVI, 4,2 (768), arguing against the alternative MS reading Γερραῖτοι, and with the Gaba'an of Arabian inscriptions. See also Tkač, RE s.v. Gabaioi, coll. 411-414.
56. Loc.cit. n. 36 above.
57. Raschke, n. 1224.
58. Meshel & Tsafirir, PEQ 107 (1975), 8-14. See also Ch. 1, p. 29 above.
59. Perip.Mar.Eryth. 19.
60. De Laet, 306-311, 331-339.
61. Pliny, NH XII, 15-16 (33-35), 66-71; Strabo XVI, 4,9 (778).
62. Pliny, NH XII, 19(42), 85-88. Strabo XVI, 4,25 (782); Raschke, 652-655, and notes, esp. nn. 1116, 1128.
63. NH XII, 13(29), 50.
64. NH XII, 17(37), 73-75.
65. Strabo, loc.cit. n. 62 above; Pliny, NH XII, 10(26) 42-46.

66. On balsam, see e.g. Diod. II, 48,9; Strabo XVI, 2,41 (763); Pliny, NH XII, 25(54), 111-124.
67. NH VI, 28(32), 144.
68. Strabo XVI, 4,21 (779).
69. Loc.cit. n. 59 above.
70. Pliny's statement that the road from Syria to Palmyra passed through Petra is strange. Although he defines as Syria the entire area between Sinai and the Euphrates (NH VI, 12(13), 66-67), it is hard to imagine from what part of this region it would be necessary or convenient to travel to Palmyra by way of Petra. Possibly the text is corrupt. It appears that some of the MSS and early editors read: eorum qui Syriae Palmyram petere. Petere cannot be right and, although Syriae Palmyram makes some sort of sense ("Palmyra of Syria"), it is awkward Latin and sounds like an attempt at emendation. One alternative emendation, suggested by Prof. J. Glucker, is: eorum qui ex Syria Palmyraque Petram petiere, which is good sense and good Latin, and has the advantage of suggesting a reason for the corruption in the homoeoarcton between Petram and petiere. Prof. B. Isaac tentatively suggests further: ex Syra Palmyraque....., referring to the city on the Euphrates which is known to have had trading links with Palmyra. (The road between the two cities was paved under Vespasian and a milestone dated AD 75 is extant. See H. Seyrig, Syria 13(1932), 266ff; AE 1933, no. 205; Bowersock, JRS 63 (1973), 133, 135). But since the name Petra appears on both the preceding and the following sentences, it would be rather awkward stylistically for it to be repeated here as well.
71. NH VI, 28(32), 145-146.
72. Warmington, 30-31; Raschke, 643-655, n. 781.
73. Agatharchides 87 (Müller, Geog.Graec.Min. I, 176-177). Strabo XVI 3,3(766); See also Tkač, RE s.v. Gerra, coll. 1270-1272 and refs.
74. See Ch. 1, p. 28 above.
75. Strabo XVI, 2,30 (759); 4,4 (768).
76. Pliny, NH V, 11(12), 65.
77. See p. 85 and n. 35 above.
78. Strabo XVI, 4,23 (781).
79. Aharoni, Land of the Bible, 54-57; Bowersock, JRS 61 (1971), 232, 238-239; Roman Arabia, 83 and the map p. 93.
80. Euseb. Onomasticon ed. Klostermann, 8,1; Notit.Dign. ed. Seeck, 73,30.
81. See Ch. 1, pp. 29-30 above.
82. Bowersock, JRS 61 (1971), 228; Roman Arabia, 64-65.

83. R. Cohen, 'New Light on the Petra-Gaza Road', Biblical Archeologist 45 (1982), 240-247, esp. 244.
84. Bowersock, JRS 61 (1971), 234; Roman Arabia, 84, 91. Note that Trajan nevertheless granted the honorific title metropolis to Petra (Roman Arabia, 84-86).
85. P.C. Hammond, The Excavations of the Main Theatre at Petra 1961-1962 (London 1965), 13-15; idem, 'New Evidence for the Fourth Century AD Destruction of Petra', BASOR 238 (1980), 65-67; K.W. Russell, ibid. 47-64.
86. I. Browning, Petra (New Jersey 1973), 59.
87. Raschke, 678, nn. 1726-1736a.
88. M. Haupt, 'Excerpta ex Timotheo Gazaeo', Hermes 3 (1869), 15. See also F.S. Bodenheimer & A. Rabinowitz, Timotheus of Gaza on Animals, 31. The chronicler Marcellinus recorded the arrival of these animals in Constantinople in 496 (Haupt, 2).
89. Meyer, 74; P. Mayerson, TAPA 95 (1964), 169-171.
90. P. Mayerson, 'The Ancient Agricultural Regime of Nessana in the Central Negev', Excavations at Nessana I, 211-269, esp. 231-249 on water conservation and irrigation.
91. G. Mazor, 'Gatot ba-Negev', Qadmoniot 53/54 (1981), 51-60. For further literary and archaeological evidence for Gaza's wine trade, see P. Mayerson, 'The Wine and Vineyards of Gaza in the Byzantine period', BASOR 257 (1985), 75-80.
92. Tot.Orb.Descr. 29A (Müller, Geog.Graec.Min. II, 518. For the date of this work, see Müller's prolegomena, I, p.L.
93. Jerome, VH 25, 26, 27.
94. Marc. Diac. 58.
95. Sid.Apoll., Carmina 17, 15-16.
96. Mag.Aur.Cass., Variorum XII, epist. 12 (PL 69).
97. Fl.Caesc.Coripp., In Laudem Iustini III, 87-88 (Corp.Script.Hist.Byz. XVIII).
98. Greg. Turens., Hist.Francorum VII, 29 (PL 71).
- 98a. Venant.Fortun., Vita S.Martini II, 80-83, ed. F. Leo (Monumenta Germaniae Historica 4a).
99. Isidorus, Etymologiarum XX, 3,7.
- 99a. Mayerson, op.cit. n. 91 above, 79-80.
100. J.A. Riley, 'The Pottery from the First Season of Excavations in the Caesarea Hippodrome', BASOR 218 (1975), 25-63, esp. 27-31.

101. For references, see Riley, op.cit. last note.
102. Steph.Byz., Ethnika ed. Meineke, 193-194.
103. PColt 85, 3, 4, 7; Excavations at Nessana III, 246-247.
104. Riley, catalog nos. 12, 13, 14. See also Dan, The City, 184-185. Dan mentions Egyptian papyri referring to imports of wine, pickled fish and pottery jars from Gaza and Ascalon.
105. Mayerson, Nessana I, 227-231. For wheat, apparently the most important crop, see PColt 40, 60-67, 69, 80-83; barley: PColt 81, 82; vineyards: PColt 16, 31, 34, 97; olives: PColt 60-67; figs: PColt 32; dates: PColt 90, 91. Mayerson, Nessana I, 249-257, argues that the archaeological evidence also points to the existence of extensive vineyards around Nessana.
106. PColt 60-67. See the introduction to these entagia (Nessana III, 175-179), and Mayerson (Nessana I, 227-229).
107. PColt 90-91; Nessana III, 261-271.
108. Nessana III, 263.
109. Nessana III, 268-270.
110. Nessana III, 262; Mayerson, Nessana I, 257, n.*.
111. PColt 89 (Nessana III, 251-260) records the employment of camels by a different trading company operating from Nessana. It gives an account of a journey to Mt. Sinai, where the use of camels was clearly necessary, but there is no reason why they should not also have been used on the shorter trip to Gaza. Mayerson (Nessana I, 225) argues that the stationing of a camel corps at Nessana (PColt 35, 37) suggests that camels were bred in the district and would also have been used in agricultural operations.
112. PColt 87.
113. Nessana I, 66-69.
114. See p. 93 above. It is perhaps curious that no wine-presses have been reported at Nessana. Is this because they did not happen to be discovered during the excavations, or was wine-making not, in fact, so important to the town as Mayerson thought?
- 114a. Gaza was an important centre of agricultural activity. In a private communication Prof. S. Applebaum writes: "I recently began to study villa distribution, and have looked up the Gaza city-territory. There are 34 sites suspected of being villas (i.e. centres of agricultural estates) within the territory; three of these, definitely villas, have been discovered fairly recently".
115. A. Ovadiah, 'Excavations in the Area of the Ancient Synagogue at Gaza', IEJ 19 (1969), 193-198, esp. 197-198.

116. Appendix no. 39.
117. M. Barasch, The David Mosaic of Gaza, 72. Dan, The City, 190-191, suggests that the timber may have been imported from the Lebanon or Cyprus.
118. Ovadiah, op.cit. n. 115 above, 195; idem, 'Les mosaïstes de Gaza dans l'Antiquité Chrétienne', RB 82 (1975), 552-557; M. Avi-Yonah, 'Une Ecole de Mosaïque à Gaza au sixième siècle', Art in Ancient Palestine, 377-383.
119. Choric. Laud.Marc. I, 32-33 (10, 24-11, 13). In many of the mosaics compared with that at Maioumas the vine forming the medallions is depicted as growing out of an amphora at the bottom of the design. This part of the Maioumas mosaic is missing. See Ovadiah, RB 82 (1975), plates XXXIX, XLb; Avi-Yonah, Art in Ancient Palestine, plates 57, 5, 6; 58. For the best photographs of the Maioumas mosaic, see EAEHL II, 143-145.
120. M. Avi-Yonah, 'The Economics of Byzantine Palestine', IEJ 8 (1958), 39-51; E.D. Hunt, Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Late Roman Empire, 128, 154.
121. See Marc. Diac. 17, 5-13 on the hostile reception given by the pagan population of Gaza and the surrounding villages to the new bishop.
122. Paula set out on her journey in AD 385 (Hunt, 76). Egeria's visit took place between the years 381 and 384. See J. Wilkinson, Egeria's Travels, 237-239.
123. Jerome, Epist. CVIII, 11.
124. Ibid. 14.
125. Iter Egeriae, ed. O. Prinz, V, 11; VI, 1, 3, 4; IX, 7; Wilkinson, 28-29, 99.
126. Iter Egeriae IX, 6.
127. Marc. Diac. 53, 6-8; 93, 1-17.
128. Marc. Diac. 92, 1-18.
129. The death of Samson: Judges 16, 21-31; Philip and the Ethiopian: Acts 8, 26-40; Paula meditates on this story: Jerome, Epist. CVIII, 11. See also Anton.Placent. 32 (ed. Geyer, CCSL 175, 145); Theodosius, de Situ Terrae Sanctae 5 (ibid., 117); Hodoeporicon S. Willibaldi XXIV (Itinera Hierosolymitana ed. Tobler, 267); Avi-Yonah, MM 67, Pl. 8.
130. Marc. Diac. 20, 14-17.
131. MM, 74, Pl. 9.
132. Antoninus of Placentia was not the author of the narrative traditionally attributed to him, but it is convenient to retain this name. See P. Mayerson, 'The Desert of Southern Palestine according to the Byzantine Sources', Proceedings of the American Philosophical

- Society 107 (1963), 160-172, esp. 160, n.l.
133. Ant.Plac. 33; Jerome, VH 46; Sozomen, HE III, 14.
134. Ant.Plac. 34-36; Mayerson, ibid., 169-172.
135. Ant.Plac. 36, 39; Mayerson, ibid., 164-166.
136. See Ch. 2, p. 54 above.
137. Ant.Plac. 33.
138. Choric. Laud.Marc. I, 89 (25, 2-4).
139. Arrian, Anab.Alex. II, 27, 7.
140. Pseudo-Scylax 104 (Müller, Geog.Graec.Min. I, 79); Kasher, Jerusalem Cathedra 2, 64; Aharoni, Land of the Bible, 415-416.
141. Arrian, Anab.Alex. II, 25, 4.
142. Kasher, loc.cit. no. 140 above; Aharoni, op. cit., 414-415.
143. Jerome, VH, 22.
144. Ibid., 2.
145. On Hilarion's relative lack of success in wining converts, see Z. Rubin, 'Christianity in Byzantine Palestine - Missionary Activity and Religious Coercion', Jerusalem Cathedra 3, 97-113, esp. 103-105.
146. Marc. Diac. 66-68.
147. See Ch. 2, pp. 49-50 above, for my argument that Marcus' narrative suggests that the Aramaic-speaking people of Gaza were more attracted to Christianity than the Hellenized upper class.
148. Chronicon Paschale (ed. Dindorf) I, 474.
149. Tosefta Negaim, ch.6 beginning (ed. Zuckerman, 625, lines 4-6).
150. The Tosefta, translated by J. Neusner, Tohorot (New York 1977), 156.
151. See Levit. 14, 34.
152. j. Abodah Zarah 1, 4; b. Abodah Zarah 11, b; 12, a.
153. Prof. S. Applebaum informs me privately: "We know that customs were usually remitted on fair days (cf. CIL VIII, 4508, for Numidia/Africa)". This exemption, however, applied only to livestock: pecora in nundinium immunia (line 11).
154. Y. Schwartz, in Eretz Israel Mehorban Bait Sheni v'ad Hakibbush Hamuslemi (edd. Baras, Safrai & Tsafir), 191-192.
155. j. Sheviit 6,1.

156. j. Bikkurim, 33.
157. A nineteenth century commentator on the Tosefta, R. David Pardo, in his commentary חוספה מרובה (Jerusalem 1971), II, 55, comments on the passage of Tosefta Negaim (n. 150 above) that 'although חוץ לארץ is not subject to house pollution, nevertheless Gaza was part of the Land of Israel in the first conquest, as the Bible shows in the Book of Joshua'.
158. Ambrosius, Epistle XL (66) (PL 16, col. 1154).
159. Avi-Yonah, Holy Land, 216; Schwarz, loc.cit. n. 154 above.
160. Sozomen, HE V, 9.
161. Leontius Neapolitanus, Vit.S.Iohann.Eleemosyn. (AA.SS. 23 Ian. III, 121).
162. ARP 389-396.
163. E. Sukenik, The Ancient Synagogue of El-Hammeh, 62; Ovadiah, EAEHL II, 411 (photograph); 416-417.
164. The description of the synagogue is taken from Ovadiah, EAEHL II, 412; IEJ 19 (1969), 195-196.
165. p. 96 above.
166. See M. Barasch, The David Mosaic of Gaza for a detailed analysis of this mosaic from the stylistic point of view.
167. Appendix, no. 40.
168. Appendix, no. 39.
169. Z. Safrai, Eretz Israel Mehorban Bait sheni V'ad Hakibbush hamuslemi (edd. Z. Baras, S. Safrai & Y. Tsafir), 257-258.
170. Y. Ben-Zvi, Sefer Ha-Shomronim, 120-121.
171. Ben-Zvi loc.cit. last note: J.A. Montgomery, The Samaritans, 127.
172. Chronicum Miscelleneum ad ann.p. Chr.724 pertinens (ed. E. Brooks, Chronica Minora, CSCO (SS) 3, 4), 147ff; Ben-Zvi, loc.cit. n. 170 above; S. Klein, Sefer Ha-Yishuv, 114.
173. Marc. Diac. 58.
174. See p. 57 above.

CONCLUSION.

The picture of Gaza that emerges is of a city that owed its wealth and importance primarily to its geographical position. The fertility and plentiful water of its site and its position as the gateway to the desert gave it a crucial strategic role. In unsettled times Gaza was, therefore, continually liable to conquest, and changed hands many times before the Romans gave it seven hundred years of stability. At the same time, considered as a city of Palestine, Gaza was on the periphery, far removed from the central regions where trouble usually started. It was thus little affected by the Jewish and Samaritan revolts and the other disturbances that troubled the province from time to time.

Yet another advantage possessed by Gaza was its open and shoal-free coast, permitting the safe mooring of ships and enabling the development of sea trade. It was because the city had a port and was the closest and most easily accessible one from Petra and Aila that the Nabataeans brought their caravans there and it became rich. But Gaza was clearly not dependent only on the spice trade: when it declined in the second and third centuries, Petra declined with it and was ultimately deserted; Gaza, on the other hand, continued to flourish and to achieve even greater prosperity. No doubt it was fortunate that at this time southern Palestine as a whole was experiencing a period of unparalled prosperity, and that improved irrigation techniques were leading to the expansion of agriculture in areas where it had hitherto been impossible. Gaza developed a substitute for the spice trade in the export of high quality wine, which became particularly popular in the West. But this cannot, on its own, have been enough to account for the city's enduring prosperity, and no doubt trade in other commodities continued to play an important part in its economy.

The event that most bitterly disturbed the peace of Gaza during the Roman and Byzantine periods was the destruction of the pagan temples and the forcible imposition of Christianity on its residents. This may have been an arbitrary and unjust act, the imposition of the will of a fanatical minority upon the people as a whole, enforced by official sanction and troops from elsewhere, but in the prevailing political and religious climate of the time, it was clearly inevitable sooner or later and, once the initial resentment had subsided, the adoption of Christianity was of benefit to the city. The desire to build and decorate churches offered a new stimulus to the crafts of building, stone-carving and mosaic design and helped further to beautify the city. The opening of Gaza to Christian pilgrims brought new visitors and new revenues to the town. Even the rhetorical school owed its success at least in part to the fact that its teachers and the city in which it was situated were Christian: students came to Gaza rather than to Athens not because the Greek taught there was purer, but because it was taught by men whose faith was not in doubt, who could be trusted not to infect their pupils with enthusiasm for pagan beliefs along with pagan literature. Without Christianity, Byzantine Gaza would have been a very different city, and a far less successful one.

Gaza under the Roman Empire was, then, a prosperous and important city, with its own individual features and development. Yet it was in no way

unusual among the cities of the eastern provinces. Other cities were equally large and wealthy, or even more so; others engaged in trade and grew rich from it; others developed as centres of higher education, whether in rhetoric, law, philosophy, or medicine; many played a more central part in the history of the period. The significance of Gaza lies as much in what in it was typical of the long-established Greek poleis of the East, as in what was individual.

In Gaza we can see how a polis of this type could grow and develop throughout a period of nearly one thousand years, adapting to a changing political environment and even to a radical change in its religious beliefs and practices. The Greek culture of Gaza may have been a thin veneer, affecting only a minority of its inhabitants and apparently disappearing, once the city was occupied by the Moslems, with their different language, religion and culture; but it had the vitality to endure for nearly a millenium, for most of it in the peace and security provided by the Roman government, and towards the end of that period Gaza attained a prosperity and a cultivated way of life that it never again achieved, once Greek civilization and Roman stability had finally disappeared.

APPENDIX: THE INSCRIPTIONS OF GAZA

The city of Gaza has not yielded a rich harvest of inscriptions, comparable to those of some other cities of the eastern provinces; but a certain number have been discovered, and some of these are of interest for the light they cast on various aspects of the history of the city. A previous collection of the inscriptions of Gaza was made by M.A.Meyer, in his History of the City of Gaza¹, but several new finds have been made since his time. I shall, therefore, attempt to bring his collection up to date by the addition of all new material published since 1907. I shall also follow Meyer in including, for the sake of completeness, a few inscriptions not found in, or deriving from, Gaza, in which the city is mentioned².

2a.

The inscriptions of Gaza are almost entirely in Greek. One (No.35) is bilingual(Greek/Latin) and two Jewish inscriptions (Nos.37,38) include a few words in Hebrew. The majority are Christian epitaphs of the period from the fifth to the seventh century. Most of these were originally published by J.Germer-Durand and C.Clermont-Ganneau, who found them in private houses in Gaza, or in collections made by local antiquaries³. They were informed by the inhabitants of Gaza that the stones had been found close to the shore, and it appears that they must have come from a cemetery at Maioumas, which presumably was preserved by being hidden beneath sand dunes for several centuries, before being rediscovered and exploited for building materials. Many of the epitaphs are carefully dated to the day of the month and the year according to the era of Gaza, and the indiction. It was in fact this information, together with that supplied by Marcus Diaconus⁴, that enabled

Clermont-Ganneau to establish with certainty the era of Gaza to 28 October 61 BC⁵.

Apart from these epitaphs, there are also one Hellenistic epitaph, some non-funerary Christian inscriptions, a few non-Christian ones, both public and private in character, some Jewish inscriptions, mainly from the synagogue at Maioumas, and the series of lead weights issued by the agoranomoi of Gaza, some of which are marked with the date, as well as the name of the issuing magistrate.

The inscriptions are arranged under the following headings:

- A: Hellenistic epitaph No.1
- B: Official dedication to an Emperor No.2
- C: Private, non-Christian dedication No.3
- D: Dated Christian epitaphs Nos.4 - 20
- E: Undated epitaphs Nos.21 - 23
- F: Fragmentary epitaphs Nos.24 - 32
- G: Non-funerary Christian inscriptions Nos.33 -36
- H: Jewish inscriptions Nos.37 - 41
- I: Non-lapidary inscriptions Nos.42 - 45
- J. Inscriptions from elsewhere mentioning Gaza Nos. 46, 47

A: Hellenistic Epitaph

1. Gaza, in use as a modern tombstone. Now in Jerusalem.

J.H.Iliffe, QDAP I (1932) 155-156 (photograph); P.Roussel, Aegyptus XIII (1933) 145-151; M.N.Tod, ibid 152-158; M.Schwabe, JPOS XIII (1933) 84-89; SEG VIII, no.269 (with full bibliography).

Ἐξ εὐδαιμοσύνης πῦρ ἄγριον ἤλυθεν ὑμέων,
 Χαρμάδα, ἔσφηλεν δ' ἔλπιδα τις νέμεσις.
 ὦλετο μὲν κοῦρος [συν]ομώνυμος εἴκοσι μούνας
 δυσμᾶς Ἄρκτοβρο[υ χειμε]ρίας ἐσιδῶν,
 5 ὦλετο δ' ἑπταἑτίς θυγατρὸς θυγάτηρ Κλεδόξα
 Ἄρχαγάθας, γονέων δ' ἔκλασεν εὐτεκνίην·
 οἰκτρον δὲ Αἰτωλὸς κοῦρην κώκυσε Μάχαιος,
 ἀλλὰ πλεον θνητοῖς οὐδὲν ὀδυρομένοις.
 Ἦ μὴν ἀμφοτέρους γε παλαίπλουτοι βασιλῆες
 10 Αἰγύπτου χρυσέαις ἠγάγεσαν χάρισιν·
 ὡς δὲ πάτραν δμηθεῖσαν Ἀνώπολιν ἐγ' ὀροδὸς ἐχθρῶν
 ὤρθωσας, Κρήτην μαρτυρέουσας ἔχεις.
 Μέμφασθαι δὲ θεοῖς ἀρκεῖ μόνον ἄνδρα γε θνητὸν,
 ὧ παῖ Τασκομένους, γῆρας ὡς χαλεποῦ
 15 ἦντησας, ψυχῆι δὲ τὰ μυρία πάντα πονήσας
 ἔκειο τὴν κοινὴν ἀτραπὸν εἰς Ἀἴδεω.

1.3. [πατρ] - Iliffe, Roussel, Tod; [συν] - SEG.
 1.11. ανω πόλιν Iliffe. 1.14. ΩΠΑΙΤΑΣΚΟΜΕΝΟΥΣ Iliffe.

This inscription predates any other found in Gaza by several hundred years. It is an epitaph in elegaic couplets, recording an eventful personal story from an obscure period of history. Briefly, the story reconstructed from these lines by Roussel and Tod independently is as follows: Charmadas the son of Taskomenes, from Anopolis in western Crete, was involved in restoring the freedom of his native city when it had been captured by enemies. He later entered the service of one of the Ptolemies as a mercenary.

He and his comrade in arms, the Aetolian Machaeus, who later married his daughter Archagatha, were decorated by the king with insignia of noble rank (Roussel, 148-149). Charmadas apparently settled in Gaza on his retirement from the army, but his later years were embittered by the tragic deaths of his son, another Charmadas, and his granddaughter Cleodoxa, the daughter of Machaeus and Archagatha.

It is, unfortunately, not possible to date these events precisely, or to state with certainty under which Ptolemy Charmadas and Machaeus served. Roussel and Tod agree that the cursive script of the inscription, which misled the first editor into dating it to the third century AD, is in fact Hellenistic, and influenced by the script of the painted epitaphs of Alexandria, but Roussel dates it to the late third or early second century BC (pp.146-147), while Tod prefers the second to first century BC (pp.155-156). Greek mercenaries were employed by all the Ptolemies. A thousand Cretans are stated to have been present in Alexandria in 220 BC (Polyb.V,36,4), and Ptolemy VI Philometor (180-150 BC) also used Cretan troops (OGIS 108; Tod, pp.156-157). There appears to have been considerable disorder in Crete for some years after 221, when many cities rebelled against the domination of Knossos and Gortyn, but the details are obscure (Roussel, pp.150-151). Tod argues that the inscription is most likely to date from the reign of Ptolemy VI Philometor, basing this conclusion partly on epigraphic grounds (p.156). But Roussel argues that this inscription with its clear expression of gratitude and loyalty to an Egyptian king is unlikely to have been erected in Gaza once that city had been lost to the Ptolemies, after its capture by Antiochus III in 201 BC (Roussel, pp. 147; 149-150). When the disturbances in

Crete in the late third century are taken into consideration, this gives a plausible terminus ad quem for this epitaph.

B: Official Dedication to an Emperor

2. Portus Augusti, Ostia, Italy.

IG XIV 926; IGRR III 387; Meyer, no.XXXVI, p.146.

Ἄγα<θ>ϛ τύχη.

Αὐτοκράτορα Καίσαρα

Μ(άρκον) Ἀντώνιον

Γορδιανὸν Εὐσεβῆ

5 Εὐτυχῆ Σεβαστὸν

τὸν θεοφιλέστατον

κοσμοκράτορα, ἡ πόλις

ἡ τῶν Γαζαίων ἱερὰ καὶ

ἄσυλος καὶ αὐτόνομος,

10 πιστῆ <καὶ> εὐσεβῆς, λαμπρὰ

καὶ μεγάλη, ἐξ ἐνκ<ε>λ<ε>ύσεως

τοῦ πατρὸς θεοῦ,

τὸν ἑαυτῆς εὐεργέτην,

διὰ Τιβ(ερίου) Κλ(αυδίου) Παπειρίου

15 ἐπιμελητοῦ τοῦ ἱεροῦ.

1.1. ΑΓΑΠΗ. 1.10. Η. 1.11.ΕΝΚΛΥΣΕΩΣ.

The date is AD 238-244, the reign of Gordian III. The inscription is of interest for its recording of the official titles of Gaza at that period, its use as a terminus post quem for the acquisition of colonial status by the city,

and for its reference to the temple of Marnas⁶. Note that the ἐπιμελητής Tiberius Claudius Papirius is a Roman citizen, one of the very few in the inscriptions of Gaza to bear the tria nomina. The citizenship is clearly an ancient one, dating back to the reign of Claudius or Nero, and the family's pride in it is indicated by the praenomen Tiberius. The Latin cognomen Papirius has not been found elsewhere in Palestine, although it appears in a number of Egyptian papyri (Preisigke, Namenbuch sv Παπεριος, Παπριος)

C: Private, non-Christian Dedication

3. 5 km. S.E. of Gaza, at the S.W. corner of the Arab race-course, the Meiden ez-Zeid. Now in the yard of the Museum of Antiquities, Jaffa-Tel Aviv. A grey granite pillar, 160 cm high.

SWP III 250-251; ARP no.7B, p.407; Meyer no.XI p.141; Lifshitz, ZDPV 79 (1963) 90-91, Tafel 7; SEG XX (1964) no.474; Applebaum, Isaac, Landau, SCI VI (1981/82) 111.

Ἀμμώνιος
 Δομestικoῦ
 ὑπὲρ Δομest
 στικoῦ υ
 5 ἰοῦ ἀνέθη
 κεν (ἔτους) μσ'.

11.1-2. Ἀμμώνιος Δομέστικου Lifshitz; Δομestικό [ς] SWP.
 11.5-6. ἀνέθη κεν Lifshitz; ανεθη κεν SWP. (ἔτους)μσ'
 Lifshitz; - - - E SWP.

If Lifshitz' restoration of the date is correct, and the Gaza era is the one used, then 240 G.E. (Gaza era) equals AD 179. The dedication of columns by individuals was common. The name Ammonius is very wide-spread in Egypt, but also occurs at Nessana (Nessana I inscr. nos. 30d, 119) and elsewhere. The name Domesticus is not found elsewhere in inscriptions in the East, although it does appear on a coin in east Caria (Lifshitz loc.cit.)

D: Dated Epitaphs

4. In the wall of the terrace of the house of the Greek vicar of St.Porphiry's Church, Gaza.

Bleckmann, ZDPV 38 (1915), 238; Abel, RB 34 (1925), 579-80; SEG VIII, 270.

Ἐνθά κεῖτ[αι]
 τὸ λε(λ)ψανον
 τρισμακαρλο[υ]
 καὶ ἐν ἀγλοῖς

5 π(ατ)ρ(δ)ς ἡμῶν Εἰρη
 ναλου τοῦ πρεσβ(υτέρου).

τὸ δὲ πν(εῦμ)α παρὰ
 τῷ θεῷ. Ἀμήν.
 Ἀνεπᾶη δὲ μη

10 νῆ Αὐδ(υ)ναίω ζ'
 ἔτους ιφ'.

1.2. ΛΙΨΑΝΟΝ. [του] Bleckmann. 1.5. π(ατ)ρ(ά)σ(ι)ν Bleckmann;
 π(ατ)ρ(ό)ς Abel. 1.6. πρεσβ(ευτ)ο(υ) Bleckmann; πρεσβ(υτέρου)
 Abel. 1.10. ΑΥΔΟΝΑΙΩ.

7 Audynaios 510 G.E. equals 2 January AD 450. This is, then, the earliest

Christian epitaph found at Gaza. The name Eirenaios appears also at Oboda in AD 293/4 (SEG XXVIII, 1370) and at Mampsis in the Byzantine period (SEG XXXI, 1412). Note also Bishop Eirenaios (or Eirenion) of Gaza (Ch.2, p.71 above).

5. A house in Gaza, found on the shore.

Germer-Durand, RB 1 (1892), no.II, p.240; ARP no.2, pp.401-402. Meyer no.1, p.132.

θήκη τοῦ μακαρί
ζωτάτου Ζήνζωνος υἱ
οῦ Βαλυδῶς καὶ Μεγά
λης· ἑκατετέθη

5 μηνὶ Ὑπερβερετέου
βκ', τοῦ ἐξφ' ἔτους
ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) γι'.

11.1-2. ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΤΑΤΟΥ. 1.2. ΖΗΝΟΝΟΣ. 1.5. ΥΠΕΡΒΕΡΕΤΕΟΥ.

22 Hyperberetaios 565 G.E. equals 19 October, AD 505. The indiction year is incorrect. It should be 14. This is probably a simple error. The name Balys is not known elsewhere, but is possibly Semitic. Megale is found also at Beer Sheba (SEG VIII, 292), Hebron (RB 77 (1970) no.20, p.81) and Nablus (SEG XXXI, 1419).

6. Gaza, collected by the Russian Archimandrite of Jerusalem in 1865.

Germer-Durand, RB 2 (1893), 203-204; ARP no.2, p.402. Meyer, no.II, p.132-133.

Ἐνθάδε
 κατετέθη
 ὁ μακάριος
 Γερδντιος, τῆ
 5 κβ'μη(νδς) Λώου, Ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) δ'
 τοῦ αοφ' ἔτους.

22 Loöds 571 G.E. equals 15 August AD 511. The name Gerontius is not known elsewhere in Palestine.

7. From the same house as no.5.

ARP, no.4, p.403; Meyer, no.III, p.133.

θῆκη τ[ῆς μακαρίας]
 θελοδοτῆς θ[υγατρὸς]
 τοῦ μακαρι(ω)τάτου [Βαλυδς]
 καὶ Μεγάλης· ἀ[νε]
 5 πᾶη μη(νῆ) Ξανθικ(οῦ) θ'
 τοῦ θπφ' ἔτους[ς]
 [Ἰ]νδι(κτιῶνος) ζ'.

1.2. ΘΕΩΔΟΤΗΣ. 1.3. ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ. [Βαλυός] ARP.

Clermont-Ganneau reads the date as 9 Xanthikos 589 G.E. Ind.7, which equals 4 April AD 529. It is possible, however, to read Ξανθικο[ῦ] thus omitting the day of the month. Clermont-Ganneau argues from the close similarity between this epitaph and no.5 and from the recurrence of the

name **Μεγάλη** that they must belong to the same family. He therefore restores [**Βαλυδς**] in line 3.

8. A house in Gaza. The inscription is in two separate pieces.

Germer-Durand, RB 2 (1893), 204; ARP no.5, pp.403-404; Meyer, no.XIX, p.143.

Ἐνθάδε

κατετέθ[η]

Στέφανος ὁ

εὐλαβ(έστατος), μ(ηνι)

5 Δ<αι>σιψ η', ἰν

δ(ικτιῶνος) β' τοῦ

θϑφ' ἔτους.

1.4. εὐλαβ(έστατος) ARP; εὐλαβ(ής) Germer-Durand. 1.5. ΔΕΣΙΩ.

8 Daisios 599 G.E. Ind.2 equals 2 June AD 539. The name Stephanus is, of course, extremely common .

9. A house in Gaza.

Germer-Durand, RB 2 (1893), 204-205; ARP no.8, pp.407-408. Meyer, no.V, p.133;

SEG VIII, 275.

Κ(ύρι)ε, ἀνάπαυσον

τὴν δοῦλῃν σου

Διγουνθαν Λεον

τῆου· ἐνθάδε κα

5 τετέθη μ(ηνι) Λώου

κα' τοῦ αχ' (ἔτους) ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) δ:

21 Loðs 601 G.E. Ind.4 equals 14 August AD 541. The name Digountha is unknown. Germer-Durand suggests that it may be Germanic; Clermont-Ganneau agrees.

10. A house in Gaza.

Germer-Durand, RB 2 (1898), 204; ARP no.9, p.408; Meyer no.VI, p.133.

Ἐνθάδε

κ<εῖ>τ<αι>ὸ τοῦ

Χ(ριστο)ῦ δοῦ

λος κ(αἰ) ἐν

5 ἀγροῖς

Ἀβραάμι

ος Πατρι

κλου διὰκ(ονος).

τῆ ἐπαγο

10 μ(ένη) δ'τοῦ

αχ'ἔτους

Ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) δ'.

1.2. KITE.11.6-7. Αβραάμιος ARP; Αβρααμ (υ)ιος Germer-Durand.

11.9-10. επαγομ(ένου) Germer-Durand; επαγομ(ένη) ARP.

The fourth epagomene (additional day) 691 G.E. Ind.4 equals 27 August AD 541.

The name Patricius is extremely common in Byzantine Nessana (Nessana I, nos.

12, 14, 73, 77, 101, 106, 117) Abraamios is also very common (ibid, nos.40,72,

79, 95, 118, 126, 128).

11. The Greek convent, Gaza.

Germer-Durand, RB 1 (1892) no.III, p.241; ARP no.10, pp.408-409; Meyer no.VII, p.131.

Μήτηρας κα[ταλει]π
πων τὸ λοιπ[ὸν τοῦ]
βλέγου αὐτοῦ ἐν[θά]
δὲ παρεγγένετ[ο].

5 ἀνεπάη δὲ ἐκ
τῶν αὐτοῦ μὲ
χθων ἐν μηνί Γορπ(ιαίω) δ'
τοῦ ἀχ' ἔτ(ους) Ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) ε'.

11.1-2. κα [ταλει]πων Germer-Durand. 1.2. λοιπ[ον] του Germer-Durand.
1.3.ΒΕΙΟΥ: 1.5. ΠΑΡΑΓΓΕΝΕΤ.

4 Gorpaios 601 G.E. Ind.5 equals 1 September AD 541. Clermont-Ganneau prefers not to insert Germer-Durand's restoration of the first two lines into his text, but apparently does not reject it. He comments, 'the formula is a singular one. It points perhaps to an early death'. The name Metras is not known elsewhere in Palestine.

It is possible that these three epitaphs dated to the late summer of 541 (nos. 9, 10, 11, and perhaps also no.21 below) are those of victims of the terrible plague which afflicted the entire Mediterranean area at that time and is vividly described by Procopius (Bell.Pers.II, 22-23). A number of epitaphs from Nessana can be attributed to the same epidemic (Nessana I 80, 112, 113, 114). It is interesting that the Nessana cases

are dated to October and November. Presumably, the plague reached Gaza first, probably from Egypt, since Procopius states that it began there (*ibid* 22,6), and then spread inland. No doubt the other Negev towns that traded with Gaza were also affected.

12. The house of the Greek vicar, Gaza.

Germer-Durand, RB I (1892) no.IV, p.242; ARP np.12, pp.409-410; Meyer, no. XXIII, p.144.

'Ανεπάη

<ή> μακαρ<λα>

'Αναθασλα μη(νι)

'Αρτεμ<ι>σλου

5 ιζ' τοϋ ηχ'

ἔτους.

1.2. EI; ΜΑΚΑΡ Η. 1.4. ΑΡΤΕΜΗΣΙΟΥ.

17 Artemisios 608 G.E. equals 12 May AD 548. The name Anathasia is unknown elsewhere in Palestine.

13. The house of the Greek vicar, Gaza.

Germer-Durand, RB 1 (1892) no.V, p.243; ARP no.13, p.410; Meyer, no.VIII, p.134.

13. Ἐνθάδε κατ
 ετκέθῃ ἢ τ(οῦ) θ(εο)ῦ δο
 ὕλη Οὔσια θυγάτ
 ηρ Τιμοθέου, ἐν
 5 μη(νὶ) Δαισίου αἰ´, τ(οῦ) κα
 τὰ Γαζ(αίους) γκχ´, ἐν
 δ(ικτιῶνος) αἰ´.

11.1-2. KATETHΘH.1.6.Γαζ(αίους) ARP; Γάζ(ην) Germer-Durand.

11 Daisios 623 G.E. Ind. 11 equals 5 June AD 563. This is the only inscription that definitely states that it is dated according to the calendar of Gaza. Clermont-Ganneau reads Γαζ(αίους) following Marcus Diaconus (103,7). The name Ousia is unknown elsewhere.

14. A house in Gaza.
 Flinders Petrie, Gerar (London, 1928), 26; Plate LXXI.

 ΠΡΩΤΟΡΟΝΟΣΩΦΙΛΕΒΟΥΛ..
 ὅς τελέων σταδίοισιν
 ἀεθλοφόροισιν ἀγῶνας
 ᾤχετο πρὸς δεκάτῃ
 5 ἔτος ἑβδομον οὔτι παρελθῶν.
 κατετέθη τῆ Ἐανθ
 ἰκοῦ Σι´τοῦ θκχ´ἔτους,
 ἐνδ(ικτιῶνος) β´.

16 Xanthikos 629 G.E. Ind. 2 equals 12 April AD 569. There are a number of points to be made about this very unusual epitaph from Gaza, which has not been discussed elsewhere, apart from a brief note by Petrie (loc.cit.). It is clearly incomplete, but it is apparent from the few lines which have been preserved that, apart from the date at the end, it is written in regular dactylic hexameters, perfectly correct in both orthography and scansion.

Apart from the problematic first line, it may be translated: '. . .who, while completing the contests in the prize-bringing stadium, departed, not yet having passed his seventeenth year'. The first line is almost entirely legible, but its interpretation is extremely difficult. The only reading which appears possible, assuming that the inscription was copied accurately, is; πρωτῶθρονος ὦ φίλε βουλῆς This scans correctly as the second half of a hexameter, and the ΗΣ of ΒΟΥΛΗΣ would fit the damaged letters at the end of the line. (The letters would be a little cramped, but this has happened at the end of some of the other lines as well.)

The word πρωτῶθρονος occurs three times in post-Homeric hexametric poetry⁷. and πρωτῶθρονες once, in a long metrical epitaph by Marcellus Sidetes, c. AD 161⁸. (Perhaps it is worth noting that here the word βουλῆ also occurs in the same line, though not in apposition to πρωτῶθρονες .) In the Gaza epitaph πρωτῶθρονος could be interpreted as a poetic synonym for προεδρος, which would not scan here. It would then be possible to take βουλῆς in apposition to πρωτῶθρονος, with ὦ φίλε as an interjection, which is perhaps a little awkward, although πρωτῶθρονος βουλῆς as a synonym for προεδρος βουλῆς (the president of the council) makes good sense. Alternatively, the line could be read as: πρωτῶθρονος, ὦ φίλε βουλῆς.

This gives rise to two questions: what is the meaning of *πρωτόθρονος*, and who is the friend of the council apostrophized here? Since the rest of the inscription speaks of athletics and the games, it is perhaps possible that *πρωτόθρονος* is a reference to *προεδρία ἐν τοῖς ἀγῶσι*, the honour of sitting in the front seats at the games, frequently mentioned in both literary and epigraphic sources⁹. But it is not clear who is the friend of the council. Is he the same person as the *πρωτόθρονος* or the reader of the epitaph? It would seem rather odd, however, to assume that only 'friends of the council' would read it.

One further problem is that it is very difficult to identify either the *πρωτόθρονος* (whether of the council, or at the games) or the 'friend of the council' with the young athlete of the following lines. These honorific titles seem very inappropriate for a boy who died at the age of sixteen; they might more plausibly be attributed to his father. But at the same time, from the point of view of Greek syntax, it would be very awkward to have a relative clause with a nominative pronoun directly following a nominative phrase which is not its antecedent. There seems, therefore, to be no totally satisfactory solution to the tantalizing problem of this apparently simple and clearly written line.

At any rate, this epitaph must be associated with the rhetorical school of Gaza, where it is known that hexametric poetry was composed in the sixth century, by Johannes of Gaza among others¹⁰. Both its metrical form and its content, the celebration of athletic prowess, hark back to classical models, and it is noteworthy that there is no trace of Christianity in the epitaph (as we have it). This might indicate that in the sixth century it was

still possible for a family of high social standing (whatever the precise meaning of the first extant line, an epitaph like this argues for wealth and culture.) to be pagan and publicly to demonstrate their indifference to Christianity. But perhaps it is more likely that by this time Christianity was so completely taken for granted that the adherents of the rhetorical school were able to display their enthusiasm for classical Greek culture without having doubts cast upon their faith. One might compare the writings of Choricus, which give no hint of the author's personal beliefs or attitude to religion.

15. Gaza.

A.Jaussen & H.Vincent, RB 10 (1901), 580; Clermont-Ganneau, PEFQSt. 1902, 137-8; Meyer, no.XXXVIII, pp.148-149.

Ἀνεπάκη

ὁ μακάριος

Σωσεβίς

ὁ ΓΥΨΟΚΣ τῆ

5 Περιτ(λου) γι', ζμχ'

Ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) ε'.

1.1. ANEΠAE. 1.4. γυψοκ(όπος) Clermont-Ganneau.

13 Peritios 647 G.E., Ind.5 equals 8 February AD 587, not as stated by Jaussen and Vincent. The name Σωσεβίς is a common variant of Σωσβίος. Clermont-Ganneau's suggestion γυψοκ(όπος) (a plasterer) for the puzzling group of letters in 1.4 is unconvincing. The word is unknown elsewhere and it would be more natural to expect a patronymic here.

16. A house in Gaza.

Germer-Durand, RB 3 (1894), 248-249; ARP no.14A,B, p.411; Meyer, no.IX, p.134.

κατετε<έ>θη ἡ

δοῦλη τοῦ Χ(ριστο)ῦ Θεο

δώρα, μη(νι) Δαισίου

ε' τ(οῦ) βεχ', Ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) ε'.

5 κατετε<έ>θη ὁ τοῦ

Χ(ριστο)ῦ δοῦλος Ἑλλας,

μη(νι) Ἑπερβετετ(αίου) βκ'

τοῦ θεχ', Ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) γι'.

1.1.KATETHΘH. 1.4. ετ(ΟΥΣ) Germer-Durand. 1.5.KATETHΘH.
1.7. Ἑπερβερετ(έΟΥΣ).

5 Daisios 662 G.E. Ind.5 equals 30 May AD 602. 22 Hyperberetaios 669 G.E. Ind.13 equals 19 October AD 609. Elias and Theodora were , presumably, husband and wife; both names are extremely common.

17. Gaza.

Vincent, RB 9 (1900), 116-117; Flinders Petrie, Gerar, Plate XIV,1;

Alt, ZDPV 51 (1928), 268-270; SEG VIII, 272.

The inscription is in two pieces, originally published separately by Vincent and Petrie. Alt combined the two.

others. It is apparent that the figure representing the hundreds has been omitted from the date. The difficulty is that, if the date is assumed to be by the Gaza era and the figure omitted is taken to be χ° (600), there is a discrepancy of six years in the indiction year of all three inscriptions. If the missing figure is assumed to be φ° (500), the discrepancy is only of one year, but the consistency of divergence suggests that this is not merely the result of error. Clermont-Ganneau suggests, therefore, that the inscriptions may be dated by some other era. He proposes that of Ascalon, noting that one of the stones is said to have come from that city, and claims that this era would give an accurate correspondence with the indiction dates. But in order to achieve this result, he has to date the era of Ascalon to October 105 BC, rather than 104, as is generally accepted¹¹. So this solution is no improvement on the previous one. Possibly some other era was used, or some other factor is involved, but at present there seems to be no way of satisfactorily solving the problem of these curious dates.

E: Undated Epitaphs

21. Gaza.

Germer-Durand, RB 2 (1893), 205: ARP no.18, p.413; Meyer, no.XXVII,
p.145.

21. Κ(ύρι)ε ἀνάπαυσον
τὴν δοῦλῃν σου
Ἄναστασιαν Ἐπι
μάχου ΔΦΕΣΤ..

5 ἐνθάδε κατε[τέθη - - -]

1.4.ΔΙΦΕΣΤ Germer-Durand; ΔΦΕΣΤ ARP.

No solution has been found for the puzzling letters at the end of line 4. The formula of this epitaph is identical to that of no.9. Perhaps this one should be assigned to a similar date.

22. A house in Gaza.

Germer-Durand RB 1 (1892), no.I, p.239; ARP no.19,p.414; Meyer, no. XXVIII, p.146.

Μηνῶ

Κοσμιάνη

κασ(ιγνήτη) <αὐ>τοῦ

1.3. ΟΤΟΥ.

23. Gaza.

Germer-Durand, RB 3 (1894), 249-250; Alt, ZDVP 47 (1924), 97-98; SEG VIII, 271.

23. Ἐνθάδε κεῖ[νται]
 δὲ υἱοὶ τοῦ [- - -]
 Οὐερσενουφίου
 Στέφανος μὲν κ(αὶ)
 5 Στεφαν[-], ἀναπαιντες μην(νι) Παυ
 ν(ι) θ', Γεώργιος δὲ
 κγ' τοῦ αὐτοῦ μην(νδς),
 Ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) δ',
 10 ἕκαστος πρὸς ποδᾶ τοῦ
 ἑτέρου.

11.2-3. [μακαρί]ου Ερσενουφίου Germer-Durand; [μακαρ(ίου)]
 Ουερσενουφίου Alt. 1.5. Στεφάν[η] Germer-Durand.

It is curious that the year has been omitted, while the days of the month and the indiction are recorded. Perhaps this was simply a mistake on the part of the stone-cutter. The name Wersenouphios is Egyptian and the month Payni belongs to the Egyptian calendar¹². Clearly the epitaph is that of an Egyptian family which had settled in Gaza. I have hesitated to read [μακαρ(ίου)] in 11.2-3, as do Germer-Durand and Alt, since that would imply that the father of the three young children (their size is suggested by the fact that they were buried in the same grave, ' each at the foot of the other') was already dead, which seems unlikely. But, on the other hand, it is difficult to think of an alternative which would fit the space. Perhaps the father had already succumbed to the same outbreak of disease that later carried off the children. Germer-Durand completes the name of the second child as Στεφάν[η] , presumably on the

assumption that there would not be two boys called Stephanos in the same family. The form $\Sigma\tau\epsilon\phi\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta$ is unknown elsewhere in Palestine, but a $\Sigma\tau\epsilon\phi\alpha\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha$ is found at Nessana in the sixth to seventh century (Nessana I, no.30j). Perhaps this form would be preferable here. According to Germer-Durand, the form of the letters suggests a very late date for the inscription.

F: Fragmentary Epitaphs

24. A house in Gaza.

ARP, no.20, p.414; Meyer, no.XXIX, p.146.

Ἄνεπ[ἀη]

ὁ μακάριος)

Ἰωάννη[ς]

Ἄμ<ῆ>ν - -

5 η - - εσ - -

1.4 AMEN.

25. A house in Gaza.

ARP no.21, p.414-415; Meyer, no.XXX, p.146.

Ἄνεπ<ῆ> <ὁ> μακ(άριος)[---

ΑΝΕΠΙΕ Ω.

26. A house in Gaza.

ARP no.22, p.415; Meyer, no.XXXI, p.146; CII, 968.

Ἰσακός Ἰου[- - -

The name suggests that this fragment may be from a Jewish inscription.

27. Gaza.

ARP no.23, p.145; Meyer, no.XXXII, p.146.

μκ
- - ιανός

28. The Great Mosque, Gaza.

ARP, p.398; Meyer, no. XV, p.142.

ΕΝΣ.ΥΣ
Ο.ΕΥΣ.ΟΜ
[μ]η(νι) Εανθιχο[Ϻ]
ἀνεπ[ἀη] - - ΕΚΗΜ - - Ἰνδ(ικτιωνος) - - -

29. The courtyard of the Great Mosque, Gaza.

ARP, p.401; Meyer, XVII,p.142.

[Ἐ]νθαδε κ[εῖται - - -]
- - - - ΑΡΚ - - -

30. A house in Gaza.

ARP, p.401; Meyer, no. XVIII, p.143.

- - - μιος Μ εν μη(νι) - - -
- - - μφ Ἀμ η ν - - - ΟΕ --

1.2. AMEN.

Clermont-Ganneau suggests restoring the name as Ἀβραάμιος,
as in no.10. The ΜΦ in 1.2 could be a date (540 G.E.). Another
numeral indicating units may have been lost.

31. A house in Gaza.

ARP p.404; Meyer, no.XX, p.144.

- - - ΙΨ Μ . .
. τοϚ . .
. φ'ἔτους - -

32. A house in Gaza.

ARP, no.11, p.409; Meyer, no.XXII, p.144.

- - - - -
τοϚ ἀχ' Ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) [.]

601 G.E. equals AD 540/1.

G: Non-Funerary Christian Inscriptions

33. In a wall in Gaza.

Abel, RB 40 (1931), pp.94-95 (photograph); SEG VIII, 268.

Ἀνενε<ώ>θη σὺν θ(ε)ῶ
τὸ τ<εῦ>χος Γάζης ἐπ<ι>Γε
ωργίου (καὶ) θωμᾶ ἐργολάβων.

1.1. ANENEOΘΗ. 1.2. ΤΗΧΟΣ; ΕΠΗ.

The city wall of Gaza was rebuilt in the reign of Justinian, at the instigation of the bishop, Marcianus, and the provincial governor, Stephanus¹³. Abel argues that this inscription cannot refer to that restoration, and must be later, because ' L'orthographe du document semble exclure la période cultivée de Marcien'. But this does not appear to be an official inscription, erected by the civic authorities to commemorate the rebuilding of the wall, but a private one, put up by the contractors, Georgius and Thomas, recording their part in the project¹⁴. There is no reasons to assume that these men, masters of a relatively humble trade, would have received the higher education provided by Gaza's literary school. Moreover, several dated inscriptions of the same period also display spelling mistakes of the same type¹⁵. The expression σὺν θεῷ, which, Abel claims, ' indiquerait un temps où les chrétiens comptaient plus sur le secours d'en haut que sur la protection du basileus', is surely no more than a simple conventional pietism, and there is no need to attribute to it any wider political significance. I see, therefore, no reason to follow Abel in inferring from this inscription a second reconstruction of the city wall at a later period - he suggests before the Persian or the Moslem invasion - rather than associating it with the sixth century restoration, the occurrence of which is so adequately attested by Choricius.

34. A corner pillar of the Meiden ez-Zeid race course, S.E. of Gaza, now in the Louvre.

Kitchener, PEFQSt. 1878, pp.199-200; Germer-Durand, RB 2 (1893), pp.205-206; ARP no.7A, pp.404-407; Meyer, no.XXI, p.144.

Τοῦ Κ(υρσο)υ ἡ γῆ καὶ τὸ
πλήρωμα αὐτῆς.

ἐπὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου
διακόνου ἐπλα

5 κώθη τὰ ΩΔΕ

ἔτους χ' μ(ηνὶ) Περιτλο[υ],
[υ[δ(ικτιῶνος)- - -].

1.5 τὰ ὧδε Germer-Durand; τὰ <ου>δε<α> Clermont-Ganneau.

1.7 - - - ιω(?) Clermont-Ganneau.

Peritios 600 G.E. equals AD 540. The first two lines are a quotation from the beginning of Psalm 24 in the Septuagint version. The word ΩΔΕ is difficult to interpret. It may be ὧδε (here), as Germer-Durand suggests, in which case τὰ ὧδε must mean 'the part here', or 'the area here'. Alternatively, as Clermont Ganneau suggests, it could be a mis-spelling of οὐδα , the plural of οὐδας, (ground, pavement). But this word is poetic, and he brings no examples of its use in everyday speech. At any rate, the sense is clear. Some part of a building, most probably a church, was paved, or inlaid with stone slabs, under the direction of the deacon,

Alexander. Clermont-Ganneau is obviously right in reading the date as 600 G.E., rather than the 640 preferred by Germer-Durand. We know that at around that time the Church authorities in Gaza were occupied with the building of the magnificent church of St.Stephen, described by Choricus¹⁶, but there is no reason to suppose that building or improvement works were not carried out in other churches at the same time.

35. A house in Gaza. Found on the shore.

ARP no.25, pp.416-418; Meyer, no.XXXIV, p.147.

- - - - ite sic Iuvenali

- - - - de omnes uno

- - - - na trinita . in

- - - - e dignetur

5 - - - - ζ Δομετ[ι]ανός

- - - - αι' - - - .

It is apparent that half of this curious bilingual inscription is missing, and what remains is very difficult to interpret. The names Juvenalis and Dometianos are known. Juvenalis was a well-known bishop of Jerusalem in the fifth century, and Dometianos a disciple of St.Euthymius, who was ordained by bishop Juvenalis. Clermont-Ganneau believes that this inscription must refer to these people, although it is not known whether they had any connection with Gaza. The form

of the letters suggests a very late date for the inscription, perhaps about the tenth century.

36. A house in Gaza, probably from Ascalon.

ARP no.24, pp.415-416; Meyer, no.XXXIII, p.146.

A marble slab, with a cross carved on it. On the four arms and in the centre of the cross are the following letters:

$$\begin{array}{c} \Phi \\ \Sigma \quad \Omega \quad \text{H} \\ \Sigma \end{array}$$

This forms the words: ζώνη and φῶς, both attributes of Christ. Clermont-Ganneau gives other examples of this formula.

H: Jewish Inscriptions

37. On a column in the Great Mosque, Gaza; now destroyed.

ARP pp.389-396 (drawing); Meyer, no.X, pp.139-141; SEG VIII, 276; CII, 967 (drawing); B.Lifshitz, Donateurs et Fondateurs dans les Synagogues Juives (Paris 1967), no.73, p.57.

חנניה בר יעקב

ANANIA
ΥΙΩ ΙΑΚΩ

11.2-3. Ανανία υιω Ιακώ ARP.
Ανανία υι<ο>(ς) Ιακω (ἐπίτισε) Lifshitz.

Clermont-Ganneau read the Greek version of the name as being in the dative case, and understood the inscription as a dedication to Hananiah, similar to that in no.3 above. Lifshitz argues, however, that the Aramaic does not support the reading of the Greek as dative, and that dedications to people were unusual in synagogues. He believes, therefore, that it is more likely that this is a building dedication, similar to no.39 below, and that the name should be understood as being in the nominative case. $\Upsilon\text{I}\Omega$ for $\nu\lambda\delta\varsigma$ is a little odd, but Lifshitz gives one example of $\Upsilon\text{I}\Omega\text{C}$ (op.cit. no.14, p.22).

38. On a mosaic pavement representing David playing a harp, in the nave of the synagogue near the shore at Gaza.
Ovadia, IEJ 19 (1969), 195, Plate 15A; idem, EAEHL I, 411 (photograph).

$\text{T}'\text{IT}$

39. On a mosaic pavement in the southern aisle of the synagogue near the shore at Gaza.
Avi-Yonah, Yedioth 30 (1966), 221-222 (Hebrew); Lifshitz, Donateurs no.73a, pp. 57-59; Ovadia, IEJ 19 (1969), 195, Plate 15B; idem, EAEHL I, 413 (photograph).

39. Μανδάμος
καὶ Ἰσουος
υἱοὶ τοῦ μακαρ(ιωτάτου)
Ἰσσητος, Ξυλέμποροι,
5 εὐχαριστοῦντες
[τ]ῷ ἁγιωτ(άτῳ) τῷπῳ καὶ
[τ]ῇν ψήφωσιν ταύτην
προσ<η>ν<έ>γκαμεν
[έν] μηνὶ Λῶψ τοῦ
10 ΘΞΦ'.

1.8. ΠΡΟΣΕΝΗΓΚΑΜΕΝ. 1.9. [εν] Avi-Yonah.

Loßs 569 G.E. equals July/August AD 509. Another dedicatory inscription.

40. On a large marble basin found in the eastern part of the synagogue near the shore at Gaza.
Ovadiah, IEJ 19 (1969), 196.

ὑπὲρ σ(ωτ)ηρ(ίας) Ῥουβήλου
κ(αὶ) Ἰσση(τος) καὶ Βενιαμίν.

Yet another dedication. All the names recorded in these synagogue inscriptions are common and typically Jewish. Perhaps the Jesse mentioned here is the same as the father of timber-merchants of no.39.

41. CII, no.969; S.Klein, Sepher HaYishuv, p. 114 (Hebrew).

[- - - - -]

πρεσβ(ευτῆς) κ(αἰ) Α [- -

-] ς κ(αἰ) πρεσ[- -

1.1.ΠΡΕΣΒΥΚΑ: 1.2. ΣΚΠΡΕΣ- -

Frey interprets πρεσβευτῆς as שליח צבור and translates: 'ministre (de la communauté). But there is no reason why ΠΡΕΣΒΥ could not also be an abbreviation for πρεσβύτερος in the Christian sense of 'priest' or 'elder', as in no.4 above, and frequently at Nessana (Nessana I, nos. 12, 35, 73, 98, 129) and elsewhere. I see, therefore, no reason for the assumption that the inscription is necessarily Jewish. Whether it is an epitaph, a dedication or any other type of inscription cannot be ascertained from this fragment.

I: Non-Lapidary Inscriptions

42. B.Lifshitz, 'Bleigewichte aus Palästina und Syrien', ZDPV 92 (1976), 168-187. In this article Lifshitz published 29 lead weights which originated from Gaza, including four that had been published previously. Of these weights, some bear inscriptions and some do not. I shall list here only those with inscriptions. For convenience, I shall retain

Lifshitz' order and numbering.

42/1.ARP, 398-399; IGRR III, no.1212; Meyer, p.155. (For full bibliography, see Lifshitz ad.loc.)

Κολωνί
ας Γαζής
ἐπὶ Ἡρώ
δου Διο
φάντου.
ιε:

This weight is of importance as the only evidence for Gaza's having been granted the status of a Roman colony. No satisfactory explanation has been found for the letters ιε. Perhaps they are a date, omitting the hundreds figure.

2. ARP, p.399; Meyer, p.155.

(Ἔτους) δεξ' ἀ
γορανο
μοῦντος
Δικαίου.

164 G.E. equals AD 103/4. The ἀγοράνομος was the official in charge of the city's markets, who issued the weights.

42/3. Clermont-Ganneau, Recueil d'Archeologie Orientale III(Paris 1900),
82-86. (For full bibliography, see Lifshitz ad.loc).

Front: "Ετους Σπ"
(δευτέρας) ἕξαμήνου
ἐπὶ ᾠλεξάνδρου
ᾠαφίου
5 ἀγορανόμου.

Back: Δικαιοσύνη.

86 G.E. equals AD 25/26. The style of the lettering and of the figure represented on the back of the weight apparently suit this early date. This inscription, together with nos. 42/10 and 42/24, proves the agoranomos of Gaza held his post for only six months, not a full year.

4. Inscriptions Reveal: Documents from the Time of the Bible, the Mishna and the Talmud (Israel Museum Catalogue No.100, Jerusalem, 1973), no.225.

ᾠαρχῆς
ᾠαυ(ηλιου) Βελλικ
ου Τηλεμ
αχου ἀγο
5 ρανόμου ζπισ'.

287 G.E. equals AD 226/7. The praenomen Aurelius indicates that this Roman citizenship was one granted under the Constitutio Antoniniana of

212. This man must have belonged to the same family as Arrianus, son of Bellicus, of no.43/1 below. The use of the tria nomina is extremely unusual, except in the case of soldiers and their families.

42/5. Ἀρχῆς
Ἀπολλω
νίου Διο
φάντου
5 ἀγορα
νόμου
γπσ'.

283 G.E. equals AD 222/3. The patronymic Διοφάντου also appears in 42/1. The two men probably belonged to the same family. Despite the close proximity in date with no.42/4 and the fact that Apollonius, unlike the official named there, does not use the tria nomina, I see no reason for Lifshitz' suggestion that this inscription may, therefore, be dated according to a different era. Aurelius Bellicus Telemachus was the exception at Gaza, not the rule.

42/6. Ἀρχῆς
Διοδότο
υ Εἰσιω(ν)
ος ἀγο
5 ρανό
μου.

42/7. Ἄγορα
ἀι (μνᾶ).

42/9. Front: ἄγορα[- -]
Back: - - ΑΙΑ.

42/10. (Πρώτης) ἕξα
μήνου
ἐπὶ Σωπᾶ
αφρῶ
191 G.E. equals AD 130/1.

42/11. (Ἔτους) αφρῶ
ἀγο(ρανόμου)
Ἄπολλωνίου.

Lifshitz argues that this weight cannot be dated to the same year as no.42/10, and that some other era must be used. He suggests the Seleucid era, which would give a date of 121/20 BC. He claims that this would suit the style of the lettering. But on the other hand, since there were two agoranomoi in each year, there is no reason why this weight should not also be dated to AD 130/1. Moreover, the formula used in this inscription is identical to that of no.42/2, of AD 103/4, whereas the two clearly dated early weights, nos.42/3, 42/12, have completely different formulae.

42/12. Ἔτους γπῶ
ἡμιλί
τρην.

83 G.E. equals AD 22/23. The style is similar to that of no.42/3,
and suits this early date.

42/13. Front: Οὖν
κίαι.

Back: τέσ
σα
ρες.

42/14. Δέ
κα.

42/17. Ἡμι
λεῖ
τριυ.

42/18. Διονυ
σίου
δ'.

42/24. Ἐτ(ους) ασ'
(δευτέρας) ἑξαμή
νου ἀγο
ρανομ
5 [ο]ῦντο
ς Ζήν
ω(νος).

201 G.E. equals AD 140/41.

42/25. Δϛτ
 ραν
 (μνᾶς).

42/26. τέταρτον
 μνᾶς.

43. Three lead weights from Gaza.

F.Mann , SBF 31 (1981), pp .245-248,(with photograph); SEG 31 (1981),
nos.1456-1458.

43/1. Lead weight in stylized anthropoid form.

Mann, no.1; SEG 31, no.1456.

ἀρχῆς
Ἄρριανοῦ
Βελλικοῦ
ἀγοραν
5 ὄμου.

1.2.A.PANOY Mann; ἈρριανουSEG.

Arrianus, son of Bellicus, clearly belongs to the same family as the
agoranomos of no.42/4 above.

43/2 Rectangular lead weight.

Mann, no.2, p.246; SEG 31, no.1457.

(ἔτους) δισ' ἐπὶ

Ἡρώδου

ἀγοραν(δμου)

Λ μδ'.

ΔΙΣ equals 214, not as stated in SEG. 214 G.E. equals AD 153/4.

In 1.4 **Λ** is an abbreviation for litra and an indication of the weight. The name Herodes also appears as that of the agoranomos of 42/1.

43/3 Three identical lead weights.

Mann, no.3, p.247; SEG 31, no.1458.

Front: (ἔτους) δισ'

ἐπὶ Ἡρώδου.

Back: Λ κβ'.

These were obviously issued by the same agoranomos as 42/2 above.

44. A clay stamp, depicting the Virgin and Child. Found at Khirbet Deir Dusawi, 9 km. E of Gaza.

L.Y.Rahmani, IEJ 20 (1970), 105-8; Plate 28, A-C.

Εὐλογία τῆς δεσποίν[ης ἡμῶν Θεοτῶ]κου Μαρίας.

The extensive site where the stamp was found is dated by numerous finds to the sixth century AD. Rahmani argues that this stamp for the

production of eulogia medallions, either from the earth of holy places, or from bread, was associated with the church of St.Sergius in Gaza, where Mary was venerated as the Mother of God. He suggests that the image on the stamp may have been copied from the mosaic in the central apse of the church, described by Choricus¹⁷.

45. A fragment of a copper ring, found in Gaza.

M.Schwabe, JPOS XIII (1933), 89, n.2; SEG VIII, no.273.

ὕγια

Ἄμοϋ

νιν.

ὕγια is a wish for the good health of the ring's wearer. Ἄμοϋνις is an Egyptian name (Preisigke, Namenbuch, 27).

J. Inscriptions from elsewhere mentioning Gaza

46. The temple of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis.

OGIS, no.596; Meyer, no.XXXV.

46. Πτολεμαῖον Σε
 ρήνου Φοινικάρχου
 υἱὸν Γαζαῖον καὶ ἄλ
 λων πόλεων πολίτην,
 5 εὐνοίας ἕνεκεν τῆς εἰς τὴν
 πόλιν καὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ τῆς π
 [ε]ρὶ λόγους ἀσκήσεως ἀμει
 βόμενοι ἀνέστησαν οἱ σεμνό
 τατοι Ἄρεοπαγῖται παρὰ ταῖς
 θεαῖς.

This inscription is dated to the third century AD. It is interesting in that it records the successful career of a rhetor from Gaza outside his own city. Note that his father served as Phoenicarch, a title the meaning of which is not entirely clear, though it is most likely that these officials were presidents of provincials diets involved in organizing festivals in honour of the emperors¹⁸.

47. Castra Lambaesisitana, North Africa.

CIL.VIII, no.18084.

A list of soldiers serving in Legio III Augusta. Line 22 reads:

- - - - Severus Gazza

The inscription is dated to the second century AD¹⁹. Severus must have been a Roman citizen to have been serving in a legion. Many of the other soldiers on the list also came from cities in Syria and Palestine.

PERSONAL NAMES IN THE GAZA INSCRIPTIONS

A: Greek

Ἀλέξανδρος	διάκονος	34
Ἀλέξανδρος	s. of Alphios, <u>agoranomos</u>	42/3
Ἀλφιος	f. of Alexander	42/3
Ἀμμώνιος	s. of Domesticus	3
Ἀναθασια		12
Ἀναστασια		17
Ἀναστασια	d. of Epimachos	21
Ἀναστασια	d. of Johannes	20
Ἀπολλώνιος	<u>agoranomos</u>	42/11
Ἀπολλώνιος	s. of Diophantes, <u>agoranomos</u>	42/5
Ἀρριανός	s. of Bellicus, <u>agoranomos</u>	43/1
Ἀρχαγάθα	d. of Charmadas	1
Γερδοντιος		6
Γεώργιος	s. of Wersenouphios	23
Γεώργιος	ἐργολάβης	33
Δίκαιος	<u>agoranomos</u>	42/2
Διδδοτος	s. of Ision, agoranomos	42/6
Διονύσιος	(<u>agoranomos</u>)	42/18
Διοφάντης	f. of Apollonios	42/5

Διοφάντης	f. of Herodes	42/1
Είρηναῖος	πρεσβύτερος	4
Είσλων	f. of Diodotos	42/6
Ἐπιμαχος	f. of Anastasia	21
Ζήνων	s. of Balys and Megale	5
Ἡλίας	(husb. of Theodora)	16
Ἡρώδης	s. of Diophantes, <u>agoranomos</u>	42/1
Ἡρώδης	(<u>agoranomos</u>)	43/2;3
Θεοδότη	d. of Megale (and Balys)	7
Θεοδώρα	(w. of Elias)	16
Θωμᾶς	ἔργολάβης	33
Κλεδοξία	d. of Machaios and Archagatha	1
Κοσμιανή	sis. of Menas	22
Λεδντιος	f. of Digountha	9
Μαχαῖος	Αἰτωλός, husb. of Archagatha	1
Μεγάλη	m. of Zenon and Theodote	5, 7
Μεγιστερία	d. of Timotheos	18
Μηνᾶς	bro. of Kosmiane	22
Μήτρας		11
Ούσια	d. of Timotheos	13
Πτολεμαῖος	s. of Serenus	46

Στεφάν[-]	d.? of Wersenouphios	23
Στέφανος	s. of Wersenouphios	23
Στέφανος		8
Σῶπας	(agoranomos)	42/10
Σωσεβις		15
Τασκομένης	f. of Charmadas	1
Τιμόθεος	f. of Megisteria	18
Τιμόθεος	f. of Ousia	13
Χαρμάδας	s. of Taskomenes	1
Χαρμάδας	s. of Charmadas	1

B: Latin

Βελλικῶς	f. of Arrianos	43/1
Δομεστικῶς	f. of Ammonios	3
Δομεστικῶς	s. of Ammonios	3
Δομετ[ι]ανῶς		35
Παπεριος, Τιβ(έριος) Κλ(αύδιος)		
	ἐπιμελητῆς τοῦ ἱεροῦ	2
Πατρικιος	f. of Abraamios	10
Σερήνος	φοινικάρχης, f. of Ptolemaios	46

Τηλέμαχος, Αὐρ(ήλιος) Βελλικός		
	<u>agoranomos</u>	42/4
Iuvenalis		35
--- Severus	<u>miles Leg.III Augustae</u>	47
 <u>C; Hebrew</u>		
*Αβραάμιος	διάκονος, s. of Patricius	10
*Ανανίας	s. of Jacob	37
Βενιαμίν		40
*Ιακός	f. of Hananiah	37
*Ισακός		26
*Ισοῦς	Ξυλέμπορος, s. of Jesse	39
*Ισσης	f. of Menachem and Yeshua	39
*Ισσης		40
*Ιωάννης	s. of Mareabdenes	20
*Ιωάννης		24
Μανθάμος	Ξυλέμπορος, s. of Jesse	39
*Ροβηλος		40
טײַט		38
הײַנן	s. of Jacob	37
הרײַ	f. of Hananiah	37

D: Other Names

Ἀμοῦνις	(Egyptian)	45
Βαλθς	f. of Zenon (unknown)	5
Διγουνθα	d. of Leontios (Germanic)	9
Μαρεαβδῆνης	f. of Johannes (Semitic)	20
Οὔερσενοῦφιλος	f. of Stephanus, Stephan[-] and Georgios (Egyptian)	23

NOTES TO APPENDIX: THE INSCRIPTIONS OF GAZA

1. Meyer, 139-151.
2. I shall not, however, include two inscriptions attributed to Gaza by J.B. Frey (CII, 966, 970), because in one case this attribution is incorrect and in the other probably so, or is at least insufficiently proven. No. 966, a fragment of a chancel screen, presumably of a synagogue, was originally published by J. Germer-Durand (RB I (1892), 248-249). He remarks of it: 'provenance incertain, région entre Jaffa et Gaza'. Frey acknowledges this, but assumes that the inscription came from Gaza. It should be noted, however, that it gives a date in the month Martius. The use of the Latin calendar is not recorded at Gaza and, while this cannot be considered proof, it suggests that the inscription did not originate there. It certainly cannot be assumed without question that it did. No. 970, an epitaph on two Jewish children, is recorded in its original publication (PEFQSt. 1920, 47) as having been found near 'Maioumas in the district of Caesarea', not the port of Gaza. On this Maioumas, see G. Schumacher, PEFQSt. 1887, 83 (Miyamas); SWP II, 66-67 (Mâ-mâs); Avi-Yonah, Gazetteer, s.v. Maiumas I; Kefar Shuni.
- 2a. I have not attempted to deal with Samaritan or Arabic inscriptions from Gaza. On the former, see Clermont-Ganneau and Abel, RB 3 (1894), 84-87.
3. ARP, 400-401. The Greek vicar of Gaza seems to have been active in gathering a collection of inscriptions from Gaza and its environs. The Russian Archimandrite of Jerusalem also collected a number of inscriptions later published by Germer-Durand (RB 2 (1893), 203-206) and Clermont-Ganneau (ARP, 403-405).
4. Marc. Diac. 19, 6-7; 21, 13-21; 34, 9-11; 54, 15-16; 103, 7-8.
5. ARP, 419-429.
6. see Ch. 2, p. 42; Ch. 3, pp. 75-76 on the probable circumstances of this dedication and the significance of Gaza's titles.
7. Callimachus, Dian. 228; Nonnus VIII, 166; Coluthus, 153.
8. IG XIV, 1389 I, 35.
9. See e.g. Aeschines 3, 76; Aristoph., Equites 575, 702; Plato, Leges 888b, 946e; IGRR III, 640, 695, 733, 739, 746 (all from Lycia); IV, 292, 11. 32-33 (Pergamon); 1302, 11. 30-31 (Cyme); 1558, 11. 29-30 (Teos).
10. Stark, 642-645; Ch. 2, p. 52 above.
11. Schürer² II, 106, n. 102.
12. For the name, see Preisigke, Namenbuch, s.v. Οὐερσενοῦφιλος. For the month, see E.J. Bickermann, Chronology of the Ancient World (London 1968), 40.

13. Choric., Laud.Marc. I, 7(4, 8-19); Laud.Marc. II, 16 (32, 5-13); Laud.Arat. et Steph. 54-56 (63, 2-22).
14. For formal building inscriptions, see e.g. H.-G. Pflaum, Syria 29 (1952), 307-330, on the third century inscriptions from Adraha in Arabia; M. Sartre, IGLS XIII,i, nos. 9130, 9135, 9136, of the time of Justinian. The fact that Procopius does not mention the refortification of Gaza as one of Justinian's building projects supports Choricus' claim that it was done on local initiative, rather than imperial orders.
15. Nos. 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, all of the first half of the sixth century.
16. Choricus's speech delivered at the dedication of this church (Laud.Marc. II) is dated between 535/6 and 548.
17. Laud.Marc. I, 29 (10, 8-11). For a similar formula, see R. Rosenthal & R. Sivan, Ancient Lamps in the Schoessinger Collection (Jerusalem 1978), 142, no. 580. This is a pottery lamp with the inscription:
 ΕΥΛΟΓΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΣ ΜΗΩΝ ΕΠΙΓΡΑΜΑ
 (their reading, corrected by comparison with the photograph). They interpret this as an abbreviated form of a wide-spread formula:
 εὐλογία τῆς θεοτόκου μεθ' ἡμῶν ἐπίγραμμα Ἰωάννου ·
 . For similar eulogia tokens from Bethlehem, see. L.Y. Rahmani, IEJ (1979), 34-36.
18. Cf. Kraeling, Gerasa, 440-441, no. 188, and Welles' comments there.
19. Schürer² II, 98, n. 59.

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